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ABSTRACT

This publication presents essays by members of Restructuring for Urban Student Success (RUSS) and other faculty, administrators, staff, and graduate students on participating campuses. The essays describe the work of RUSS and document curricular restructuring and reform efforts occurring at RUSS partner institutions. Part 1 includes essays by RUSS partners: "Introduction to the RUSS Essay Collection: Letters from the Editors" (B. Jackson, J. Levine, and J. Patton); "Introduction: Reporting Out in Year Four" (N. Hoffman and H. Woodcock Ayres); "Creating Community at Urban Universities: Learning Communities and Other Curricular Innovations" (G. Williams, J. Levine, and J. Patton); "Sustaining a Grant Partnership: Personal Reflections on the Powers and Perils of Collaboration" (J. Levine, S. Evenbeck, N. Hoffman, and C. White); and "Reflections on the Development of an Entering Student Survey for Urban Universities" (H. Woodcock Ayres, V.M.H. Borden, J. Degnan, and K.A. Ketcheson). Part 2 features Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI): "Learning Communities at IUPUI" (G. Williams); "Learning Communities in a Professional School: Implementing Learning Communities in the Kelly School of Business at Indiana University" (R. Magjuka); "Use of Instructional Teams in First-Year Seminars" (W. Orme and R. Van Voorhis); "Faculty Development and Learning Communities" (B. Jackson); "Changing Roles, Assuming New Responsibilities: The Academic Advisor in the Urban University (R. Vermette, P. Seabrook, and L. Ruch); "The Importance of Student Mentors in First-Year Seminars" (L. Haas); "Writing to Enhance, Demonstrate, and Evaluate Learning in the First Year Seminar: A Faculty Development Initiative" (S. Hamilton); "A Collaborative Approach to Assessing Learning Communities" (V.M.H. Borden); "What Students Need To Know To Make a Successful Transition To College: Evaluating the Template for First Year Seminar" (A. Lowenkron and R. Magjuka); and "Learning Communities and the Pedagogy of Critical Readings and Critical Writings" (K.C. Robbins). Part 3 features Temple University: "Of Firmament and Fin" (S. Albertine); "Faculty Collaboration: Perceptions on Teaching in a Learning Community" (K. Busocker); "Writing Courses in Learning Communities" (E. Goldblatt, K. Zervos, and R. Bright); "Building Community through Learning: Moving Students

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into the University by Moving Outside the Classroom" (L. Shorr and S. Parks); "A Learning Community Freshman Seminar" (D. Tompkins); and "Experience Keeps a Dear School" (R. Williams, Jr.). Part 4 features Portland State University: "Improving the Support of Writing in Learning Communities" (G. Jacob and C. Burnell); "Capstones and Academic Integrity" (S. Agre-Kippenhan); "Student Affairs in Helping Learning Communities Succeed: Partnerships Beyond Functional Titles" (V. Torres); "Using Undergraduate and Graduate Students to Build and Sustain Learning Communities" (C. Reynolds); "Senior Inquiry: A Portland State University/High School Collaboration" (B. Traver, J. Patton, J. Straton, and J. Whittlesey); and "Assessment: A Collaborative Learning Practice" (R. Jessen and C. Ramette). (Papers contain references or bibliographies.) (SM)

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RUSS

Restructuring for Urban Student Success

Essay Collection

IUPUI

PORTLAND STATE
UNIVERSITY

TEMPLE

Collection distributed for
discussion at the RUSS Capstone Conference,
May 4-6, 2000 at IUPUI.

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Restructuring for Urban Student Success
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Introduction to the RUSS Essay Collection
Letter from the Editors

When we first conceptualized the RUSS essay collection we envisioned that it would be one of the primary products of the Restructuring for Urban Student Success (RUSS) collaborative. We thought it would contain framework essays written by RUSS partners that reflected on the process and work of a three-year grant project.

The scope of the essay volume quickly expanded to include essays contributed by faculty, administration, staff, and graduate students on the participating campuses. Since our colleagues played such valuable roles in RUSS events throughout the grant period, inviting them to reflect and write on their experiences was consistent with one of the important premises of the RUSS grant -- continuing to develop communities of teachers and learners on our campuses.

This essay collection is intended to not only describe the work of RUSS, but also to capture and document the curricular restructuring and comprehensive reform efforts taking place at the RUSS partner institutions. Through the voices of our colleagues, readers can gain valuable insight into what it looks and feels like to design, implement, deliver, maintain, and assess the types of learner-centered environments we are trying to create on our campuses.

The essay collection is organized into four sections. The first section contains essays written collaboratively by RUSS partners. These framework essays provide an overview of the RUSS project; describe the curricular restructuring efforts of our campuses; reflect on the power and perils of collaboration; and offer views on assessment. Sections two through four are the campus contributions. Each section begins with a brief introductory message from the campus. To help the reader navigate the volume we have created two tables of contents. The first organizes the essays by section and campus. The second arranges the essays by theme: writing/curriculum, expanding definitions of learning communities, changing faculty, student, and professional roles, and assessment.

The collection is being distributed on the RUSS partner campuses and to the campuses sending teams to the RUSS Capstone Conference, May 4-6 at IUPUI (University of Texas at San Antonio, Georgia State University, University of Memphis, University of Louisville, Northern Kentucky University, Wayne State University, Northeastern University, Ferris State University, and University of Minnesota General College).

We wish to thank all of the faculty, administrators, staff, and graduate students who contributed to this project. It has been a pleasure and a privilege working with all of you. These essays only begin to reflect the commitment and courage of the individuals who work tirelessly each year to make undergraduate reform a reality on our campuses. We are forever in your debt and dedicate this essay collection to you.

The RUSS Essay Collection Editors
Barbara Jackson, *IUPUI*
Jodi Levine, *Temple University*
Judy Patton, *Portland State University*

Restructuring for Urban Student Success
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Introduction: Reporting Out In Year Four
Restructuring for Urban Student Success

Nancy Hoffman, RUSS Project Convener
Heather Woodcock Ayres, RUSS Research Assistant

Although they do not always fit the same Carnegie classification, urban public institutions have certain similarities. They pride themselves on highly competitive research, graduate, and professional programs, but they also include in their urban mission programs and services accessible to first generation college students. They enroll fully funded graduate students carrying out cutting-edge research, and entering students who commute to campus, work 40 hours a week, and carry out family responsibilities. Because of this "mission stretch" and an environment often characterized by uncertainty and unplanned change, urban public universities can lose sight of their goals for and responsibilities to entering students.

Restructuring for **U**rban **S**tudent **S**uccess (RUSS) is a partnership of three institutions the goal of which is voluntary self-study, assessment, and improvement of the education of entering students in urban universities. ["Entering student" means first time students and transfers.] Funded in 1996 by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the RUSS collaborative includes Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis [IUPUI], Portland State University [PSU], and Temple University, all of which have five to seven years of experience with different models of learning communities. Working together, the RUSS partners developed voluntary self-study and assessment practices which make public their challenges and successes in improving undergraduate education. The RUSS project answers two large questions: whether the implementation of learning communities in urban universities leads to improved student engagement and retention; and, whether the self-study/site visit process developed by the partners advances the institutional change process.

The term "learning community" has many meanings among those improving undergraduate education today. The "learning community" models in this project were developed explicitly to improve the engagement, retention, and academic achievement of all students, especially those with weak secondary preparation. These learning community programs are large-scale, involving thousands of students and hundred of faculty, graduate assistants, peer mentors, advisors, and—at IUPUI—librarians. And they begin with the assumption that once we admit students, we are responsible for helping them make the transition into academia.

Accordingly, the RUSS project

- collects data and uses it to highlight the lives, achievements, and goals of urban students;

Nancy Hoffman is RUSS Project Convener and Senior Lecturer in Education at Brown University and **Heather Woodcock Ayres** is the RUSS Research Assistant and a doctoral student in the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

- uses a self-study/site visit process to engage the university community in discussion of how well the institution is doing with entering students and how to improve;
- serves as a think tank across institutions to provide support, transferable ideas, and new approaches useable for those who work every day with entering students; and,
- examines problems of sustaining planned change in a climate of organizational and fiscal uncertainty.

Other issues RUSS addresses in addition to those mentioned above include: sustaining faculty teams; working with K-12; using assessment results to guide change; and sustaining institutional support for programs for entering students. Practices from one campus have been adapted for others. IUPUI's very strong peer mentoring program, Temple University's process for evaluating the reading and writing skills of entering students, and Portland State's team-planned interdisciplinary courses among other strong practices have influenced work on the partner campuses [and, increasingly among sister institutions]. Faculty, administrators and staff across the institutions use each other's expertise to work on common problems. Finally, the data collection and self-study/site visit processes have contributed to each campus' preparation of documents for their regional accreditation self-studies.

RUSS results and products. The work of the RUSS project is not only to improve outcomes for entering students, but also to change urban institutions to attend permanently to student needs. The essays included in this volume are written by participants in the three campus projects, and, with the more formal documents produced by the project-- self-studies and reports on each campus by outside "critical friends"-- constitute a comprehensive portrait of the results of the RUSS project in meeting its goals in its fourth year. There are also project "products" including items for common data collection and a common self-study protocol and site-visit process.

Survey Items. In order to collect comparable data across the partnership, RUSS has designed a compendium of items to be incorporated into each institution's entering student survey. The items illuminate the high degree of variation among students entering urban universities as well as factors that differentiate students entering urban, public university settings from "traditional" students. The items inquire about hours of paid employment, preparation for academic work, knowledge of what to expect from college, childcare and living arrangements, and the like.

Self-study/ Site Visit Process. The heart of RUSS is the self-study/site visit process in which teams of learning community faculty, staff, administrators and students prepare a study according to a RUSS-designed protocol and invite distinguished "critical friends" to campus for three day site visits to join teams from the partner campuses. Each campus prepared for its site visit by convening campus teams to respond to four questions in regard to their learning communities or curricular restructuring efforts:

1. What three best practices has our campus identified from which others might learn?
2. What three notable strategies have led to or sustained change?
3. What three current or on-going challenges do we face today?

4. What opportunities exist for us?

Critical friends included the following: At Temple-- Daniel Bernstein, University of Nebraska; Carol Schneider, AAC&U; and David Schoem, University of Michigan. At IUPUI-- Roberta Matthews, LaGuardia Community College, Betsy Barefoot, National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience, and Deanna Martin, University of Missouri-Kansas City. At Portland State--James P. Honan, Harvard School of Education, Judith Stanley, Alverno College, and Theresa W. Hollander, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Director of Articulation, University System of Maryland.

An unusual feature of the site visit process is that it is both evaluative and action-oriented. Thus, the campus visits include seminars for faculty and staff, open meetings about difficult issues, and the formulation of recommendations for the future. The reports of the critical friends are made public, used to make mid-course corrections and inform planning, and to inform those on other campuses interested in entering student programs.

Fourth Year Conference. As they entered their fourth year of partnership, RUSS partners issued a letter of invitation to urban institutions wishing to learn from RUSS and to bring their own successful practices to a wider audience. Selected through a competitive process, nine institutions were selected to join the RUSS partners at IUPUI on May 4-6, 2000. The guests included: University of Texas at San Antonio, Georgia State University, University of Memphis, University of Louisville, Northern Kentucky University, Wayne State University, Northeastern University, Ferris State University, and University of Minnesota General College.

The new institutions sent teams of three to five persons-- including faculty, administrators, advisors, librarians, undergraduate peer mentors, and graduate assistants-- to the conference. Each team included a person with lead responsibility for a major undergraduate reform effort on campus. The goals of the conference were: to engage a wider group of peer institutions in discussing what RUSS has learned about educating entering students; and, to bring the self-study/site visit process as a forum for public accountability to a wider audience. The conference consisted of working sessions developed from this collection of essays and practitioner workshops given by the new institutions. Invited guests, among them several of the "critical friends" from the RUSS self-study/site visit process, assisted in developing a plan for the future of the group, including the possibility of seeking further funding.

How RUSS leaders work together. Each institution has a small group [2-4 persons] who function as the RUSS leadership group, and meet five or six times a year on the partner campuses and at conferences. They design the assessment activities collaboratively and in consultation with a broader group on their campuses. RUSS work is facilitated by a project convenor and reviewed by outside experts and evaluators. Project members write and present together about learning communities. [See bibliography below.] The work of RUSS intersects with the Urban University Portfolio Project, housed at IUPUI and also funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts. RUSS participates in other national projects concerned with learning communities and entering students including those of the Washington Center at Evergreen State College and National Resource Center for The First Year Experience and Students-In-Transition. The RUSS leadership team has remained remarkably stable. Key RUSS leaders include: LIST At Temple-- Jodi Levine and Daniel Tompkins [years 1-3]; at IUPUI-- Scott Evenbeck, Barbara Jackson, and Gayle Williams; and, at Portland State-- Judy Patton and Charles White [years 1-3].

RUSS Publications

Levine, J., ed. (1998). Learning communities. Metropolitan Universities 9 (1).
Levine, J. Beyond a definition of learning communities; *Tompkins, D & Mader R.* Creating community among teachers; Faculty development in learning communities; *Evenbeck, S & Williams, G.* Learning communities: An instructional team approach; *Hoffman, N.*, Learning communities, high schools and school reform; *White, C.R.* Placing community-building at the center of the curriculum; *Borden V. & Rooney, P.* Evaluating and assessing learning communities.

Levine, J. ed. (1999) Learning communities: New structures, new partnerships for learning (Monograph no. 26) Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. *Evenbeck, S., Jackson, B., McGrew, J.* Faculty development in learning communities: The role of reflection and reframing; *Ketcheson, K. & Levine, J.* "Evaluating and assessing learning communities.

Levine, Jodi and Shapiro, Nancy. (1999). Creating Learning Communities. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Panel Presentations (teams of RUSS presenters)

"Restructuring for Student Success: Learning Communities in the Urban University," 86th Annual Meeting of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, Washington, D.C., January 2000.

"Describing the Urban Student," 39th Annual AIR Forum, The Association for Institutional Research, June 1999

"Using New Forms of Assessment to Drive Learning Communities Planning and Improvement," National Conference, The Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, May 1999

"Inter-Institutional Peer Review: An Alternative Structure for Promoting Institutional Change," National Conference on Higher Education, American Association of Higher Education, March 1999.

"Learning About Tomorrow's Leaders: An Entering Student Survey for Urban Universities," ACPA '99: Educating Tomorrow's Leaders. Commission IX: Assessment for Student Development.

"The Role of the Freshman Seminar in the Instructional Delivery of Learning Communities," 11th International Conference on the First Year Experience, Dublin, Ireland, July 1998.

"Learning Communities Online: Linking Learning Communities and Technology," 1997 Conference on Assessment and Quality, American Association of Higher Education, June 1997.

Conference Workshops

19th Annual National Conference on 18th Annual National Conference on the First-Year Experience University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, February 2000.
"Creating Learning Communities" (Levine)

2000 National Conference on Higher Education, Washington, DC.
"Learning Communities: Creating a Union of Students, Teachers and Disciplines"
(Levine, with Nancy Shapiro, Phyllis Van Slyck, and Will Koolsbergen)

18th Annual National Conference on the First-Year Experience University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, February 1999.
"Designing and Implementing Learning Communities: Basic Principles"
"Building and Sustaining Learning Communities: An Expanded Conversation" (Levine)

1999 National Conference on Higher Education, Washington, DC.
"Taking Structure Seriously: Using Learning Communities to Transform Institutions"
(Levine, with Roberta Matthews, Phyllis Van Slyck, and William Koolsbergen)

Creating Community at Urban Universities: Learning Communities and Other Curricular Innovations

Gayle Williams, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis
Jodi H. Levine, Temple University
Judy Patton, Portland State University

The RUSS partners first became aware of each other through a "mutual friend," a blind date so to speak. A colleague at Pew Charitable Trusts was familiar with the undergraduate reform efforts taking place on our respective campuses (Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, Portland State University, and Temple University), knew we had a few things in common and thought that, as a grant group, we would make a nice match. One of the important commonalities was that we were each attempting to create continuity in our curriculum and build community among students and teachers, as well as improve student performance and persistence.

Temple, one of the first campuses approached by PEW to participate in a possible collaborative project, was doing innovative work implementing learning communities at an urban, comprehensive research institution. When it came time to invite other campuses to the project, logical partners were those considering or implementing either learning communities or other like reforms designed to promote the development of stronger connections between entering students, between students and their teachers, and between faculty members in their various disciplines.

In this essay, we describe Portland State's, Temple's and IUPUI's approaches to curricular restructuring and highlight the important ways our programs are both alike and

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different. Our individual efforts were guided by common values and characteristics, but our models vary in organizational approach. A "one size fits all" definition or model of learning communities or curricular reform cannot possibly describe the work on three very different urban campuses. While our goals are quite similar, the programs we have established on each of our campuses are unique. Each program began as an effort to create supportive learning environments or communities for entering students but we have chosen different terminology to describe those initiatives and taken different paths to accomplish our goals.

The specificity of the characteristics and challenges in our work has become central in RUSS project conversations on how to improve undergraduate education. This essay is an extension of that dialogue. The voices of the three authors are distinct, but it is our hope that our readers will find the "similarities in difference" that we have come to value helpful.

Part I Definitions and Models of Learning Communities

Nationally, there are many learning communities programs operating under a variety of definitions. Many of these programs, and perhaps those considered the most successful or best known, adhere to the basic principles of learning communities articulated in the work of MacGregor, Smith, Matthews, Gabelnick, Astin and others. However, as the number of learning communities programs grow so does the variation amongst the definitions and models. When we began the RUSS project, we thought that our learning communities programs would have more in common with one another considering the fact that we are all operating at urban universities that attract similar student populations. We discovered in the process, however, that our students and institutions have different needs, challenges, and cultures and as a result we approach learning communities differently. Our learning communities definitions and models vary among our three institutions as much as they do when compared to other national models.

The primary goal of this essay is to present learning communities in the context of three urban university campuses which are trying to meet the diverse needs of entering student populations. In large part, our efforts are informed by the literature on learning communities and by what we have learned about the best practices on other campuses in site visits and conversations with colleagues. And where possible our programs have attempted to adhere to those values of learning communities that we have come to recognize as central to student learning, most importantly the concept of creating community.

Despite the on-going conversation taking place on individual campuses and across the higher education landscape, there is no proprietary definition of a learning community. A definition frequently discussed is one offered by MacGregor, Smith, Tinto and Levine (1999):

> A variety of approaches that link or cluster classes during a given term, often around an interdisciplinary theme, that enroll a common cohort of students. This represents an intentional restructuring of students' time, credit and learning experiences to foster more explicit intellectual connections between students, between students and their faculty, and between disciplines.

Other learning communities advocates prefer a broader description that describes the curricular and co-curricular potential of learning communities. Alexander Astin (1985), who recommended organizing students into learning communities to help them overcome feelings of isolation common on large campuses, offered a definition, which acknowledged that learning occurs in a variety of settings:

> Such communities can be organized along curricular lines, common career interests, vocational interests, residential living areas, and so on. These can be used to build a sense of group identity, cohesiveness, and uniqueness; to encourage continuity and the

> integration of diverse curricular and co-curricular experiences; and to counteract the isolation that many students feel (p. 161).

Rather than debate the question of what a learning community is this essay will contribute to the on-going discussion regarding the common characteristics of successful learning communities. Learning communities typically:

- Organize students and faculty into small groups
- Encourage curricular integration
- Help students establish academic and social support networks
- Provide a setting for students to be socialized with regard to college-level expectations
- Bring faculty together in more meaningful ways
- Focus faculty and students on learning outcomes
- Provide a setting for community-based delivery of academic support programs
- Offer a critical lens for examining the first-year experience. (Shapiro and Levine, 1999)

The discussion on what constitutes a learning community does not end with debate over definition or terminology, but includes a lively conversation on models and structures. Again, the work of Gabelnick, Matthews, MacGregor, and Smith provides a helpful starting point for considering curricular structures for learning communities. Three of the approaches described below are adapted from the models originally described in their 1990 monograph: paired or clustered courses, cohorts in large courses or FIGs (freshmen interest groups), and team-taught programs. A fourth approach is residence-based learning communities, models that intentionally link the classroom-based learning community with a residential life component (Shapiro and Levine, 1999).

A *paired (or linked) learning community* involves two courses in which students enroll as a cohort. Faculty collaborate to develop a curricular theme and integrate course content across their discrete, individually taught courses. Faculty collaboration and the size of the community vary, although course enrollment is usually limited to learning communities students only.

Clusters involve three or more courses organized around a curricular theme. The community constitutes the majority of a student's semester coursework. A cluster may include a for-credit seminar or integrated learning hour in which students work with their teachers and peers to synthesize the content of discipline-based courses. As with links, faculty collaboration and the size of the community vary.

Freshman Interest Groups or FIGs, enroll student cohorts in larger courses. Typically found at large institutions, FIGs enroll small groups of students in sections of two to three discretely taught lecture courses. The community also meets in a weekly seminar where students can work collaboratively to form connections among their courses. On many campuses a peer leads the FIG-seminar. While the courses in the community are arranged around a theme, there is little to no coordination among faculty teaching courses that constitute the FIG.

Team-taught programs, or coordinated studies, are the most complex in terms of interdisciplinary focus and faculty and student interaction. This approach involves small cohorts of students who are taught using an interdisciplinary approach by faculty from different disciplines. The entire semester or quarter schedule is often devoted to the learning community work.

Residence-based learning communities programs typically adapt one of the curricular approaches described above to include a residential component. Many of these programs draw upon the principles of both the learning communities and residential college models. A primary goal of residence-based learning communities is the integration of students' living and classroom environments. Students reside in dedicated space and enroll as a cohort in a common set of courses. In some instances these courses meet in classrooms located within the students' residence.

The programs on the RUSS partners' campuses share common elements of mainstream learning communities definitions and models, they differ however, since each campus has developed a template for learning communities that best fits the student, faculty, and organizational cultures of that particular campus. Temple and IUPUI have programs modeled after the paired or clustered course approach, while Portland State's Freshman Inquiry Program more closely resembles the team-taught structure. The efforts involved in designing and implementing comprehensive reforms at urban universities are outlined more broadly in the next section of this essay. Following this discussion we offer our individual definitions of learning communities and describe the models in place on our respective campuses.

Part II Unique Challenges of Learning Communities at Urban Universities

A college campus can be an intimidating place even for transfer students, but for freshmen, a new campus can be overwhelming. In addition, new students often get entangled in the social transition and apply too little energy to the more challenging task of academic transition. As a result, they may slip into poor academic habits long before their problems become obvious to college personnel. Urban students also typically exhibit other characteristics that have a negative influence on academic success including the following:

- They are frequently commuter students
- Many are first generation college students
- Some are poorly prepared for college-level work or expectations
- They often work twenty hours or more a week
- Many enroll part-time or will need to "stop out" for family or job demands
- Some are parents or are financially responsible for siblings or other family members

- They are more likely to be non-traditional students, older or from underrepresented populations
- Most rely on financial aid
- Many are unsure about their academic goals and are undecided about their majors.
- Some are in a life transition as a result of a workforce change, divorce, or illness

A welcoming and supportive environment will help ensure that all students begin college successfully, but a learning community environment may provide a particularly important avenue of support for the academic success of urban university students because learning communities:

- Offer a time and a place where new students can get to know a small group of other students well in an academic, rather than a social setting.
- Introduce new students to collegiate expectations while at the same time providing the necessary support to meet those challenges.
- Encourage new students to learn in collaboration with other entering students and to join in scholarly discussions intended to help them become excited about the new academic opportunities available in a collegiate environment.

A number of years ago, Alexander Astin in a presentation at IUPUI suggested that retention was a particularly vexing problem on commuter campuses. He pointed out that students on residential campuses are more likely to remain enrolled because to leave college would create a disruption in their daily lives: they would need to change living arrangements and jobs, and alter their social connections. Commuter students, however, often maintain the same friendships, jobs, and living arrangements that they had in high school and make few personal connections when they enter college. College *is*, therefore, *the disruption* in their lives. When academic and financial pressures develop, commuter students, too frequently, eliminate the most obvious stress factor—college itself.

Among the risk factors that urban students bring to the collegiate environment, two seem to be the most critical: urban students are frequently commuters, and they often feel like outsiders on the campus. The problems connected with students who commute to campus are easy to identify if not to solve, but the problems associated with students who feel like outsiders on college campuses may have a variety of causes, even unknown to the students themselves. Providing a small, supportive community for these students may be exactly what they need to help them become engaged in the life of the campus.

Learning communities are designed to provide a small, intimate place for students, where they feel that they belong. In addition, the learning environment automatically supplies new students with a small group of peers who are in similar life situations. A learning community environment can also provide a safe place for students who would otherwise feel alienated or lost on large urban campuses. If commuter students connect with their collegiate peers, the college experience becomes more important to their daily lives. As a result, they may make a different decision if they are tempted to leave campus because they value maintaining those connections.

Learning communities may be particularly beneficial for urban university students because of their complex needs, but establishing a learning community program on urban campuses can be especially difficult because of those same complex needs. For example, commuter students are often limited by a preset daily schedule. They may have many outside obligations from parenting to job expectations. They may also commute long distances to the campus. Urban campuses are also often as busy at night as they are during the day. There are weekend classes and off-campus selections, all created in an effort to serve the needs of urban residents who have complicated and demanding daily schedules. It is particularly difficult, therefore, to design a learning community program that includes linked courses or a block schedule of classes, which must also accommodate the schedule restraints of a sufficient pool of students to ensure adequate enrollment.

In addition, urban campuses are large, bureaucratic institutions with entering student enrollments numbering in the thousands. Providing a learning community experience for all entering students can be a major drain on campus resources, particularly in personnel. For example, academic advisors who are trained to introduce new students to the program are needed. Many learning community programs also employ student mentors to assist in each section. The most difficult task, however, is recruiting the number of faculty members needed for large learning community programs.

The infrastructure of a large learning community program can also be immensely complicated. The orientation staff and the academic advising unit are involved on most campuses, which means the schedules of those staff members and their programs must be considered. Possibly the most complicated aspect of implementing learning community programs on large, urban campuses, however, is the registration process itself. Block schedules and linked classes must be arranged well in advance of the semester. Classroom space must be secured as well. Typically, the courses are linked by computer to ensure that students who enroll in a learning community select the course sections assigned to that block. The computer should also lock in their schedule to keep students from splitting their learning community sections accidentally or by design. The campus Registrar, therefore, plays a critically important role in implementing a successful program.

Despite all of the obstacles that large urban campuses face in instituting learning community programs, there are also advantages to an urban setting. Learning communities, for example, can easily incorporate service learning projects as a component of the curriculum. In addition, the diversity of the student population on urban campuses, which often represents a wide range of age groups and ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, provides a rich source for classroom discussions on a variety of topics. The urban setting itself also offers learning community cohorts a smorgasbord of places to visit and study as a class, from museums to homeless shelters.

Perhaps the greatest advantage that urban campuses have in offering learning communities is that urban university students want and need a sense of community. They do not naturally form connections with their peers or campus personnel. Campus housing and social gatherings are not a part of their experiences, and they are often anxious to meet other students who have equally complicated lives. It is not unusual for members of a learning community class to help care for another student's young child when a babysitter suddenly cancels or to provide a ride to campus when another student's car is in the shop. They are also quick to offer advice and to support each other's efforts to succeed. In other words, by establishing a learning community environment, the staff on an urban campus provides the space and the opportunity for real community building to take place.

Part III Three Approaches to Learning Communities at Urban Universities

As described in Part I, the concept of learning communities cannot be considered apart from the characteristics that describe them. It is not only structuring students into small groups that improves undergraduate education, but the way students and their learning are viewed and cultivated also helps ensure student success throughout the undergraduate experience. The three institutions participating in the RUSS project have approached the process of creating learning communities differently, but each effort has been highly effective. The three variations will be described as a way to suggest possible models. It is not our intent to mandate any particular model but to encourage institutions to design learning community programs to meet the needs of their own specific institutions and of their student populations.

Portland State University

Portland State's model least fits the traditional definition of a learning community. The general education curriculum is not based on linked courses, but rather on communities of students, faculty and student mentors who work in differently configured learning communities in three of the four levels of coursework. The program, University Studies, is based on four goals: communication; inquiry and critical thinking; the variety of human experience; and ethical issues and social responsibility. The first year curriculum infuses first-year seminar information and activities with academic content to advance a grounding in disciplinary knowledge and an understanding of how to successfully navigate the college experience.

Groups of 36 or fewer first-year students study with a faculty member and peer mentor in year-long, interdisciplinary theme-based courses that are designed by faculty/mentor teams. These courses are called Freshman Inquiry (Frinq). The main class session meets twice weekly and is linked to twice weekly peer mentor sessions composed of even smaller groups of students (14 or less).

The learning community model is then continued in Sophomore Inquiry (Sinq). Each student attends the main class sessions and in addition has one mentor session per week composed of smaller groups of students from the main class. All mentor sessions in both Frinq and Sinq are held in computer labs that also are designed to facilitate group discussions and projects.

The Sinqs are gateway courses that lead to upper division clusters. There are 26 different theme-based, interdisciplinary clusters. Students take three Sinqs and choose one to continue more in depth study in the form of three additional term-long courses. In this way the student experience begins with an introduction to the University Studies (Unst) goals, to multiple disciplinary perspectives and to accessing opportunities in the university in a broad-based, active learning environment and moves to more content specialization in the Sinq/cluster coursework.

The final requirement of the program is a Senior Capstone course that brings interdisciplinary groups of students together, facilitated by a faculty member in conjunction with a community partner, to work on a community issue or need. Each Capstone produces a final product that is the result of the process of group research, problem solving and reflection on the project at hand. Using community to support and enhance learning remains at the core of the student experience throughout the curriculum. Students are encouraged to make connections with faculty, with each other and with the community throughout their college career.

The Freshman Inquiry courses use portfolios to integrate reflection into the curriculum and to enhance student learning. Samples of these portfolios are used for program evaluation at the end of the year. PSU is currently working on a project to integrate portfolios and their assessment into the rest of the four-year curriculum. The use portfolios are a practice that works well with learning communities. Portfolios provide an opportunity for students to observe their progress in various areas, review what they have learned, and showcase their work to others.

The four-year student portfolios will be digital and will give students a permanent record of the work they have done during their undergraduate education.

Temple University

Temple's approach to learning communities most closely resembles mainstream definitions and models. In 1993 we implemented learning communities in our first-year curriculum with two objectives: 1) development of a sense of community among entering students; and 2) improvement of teaching at the freshman level. A related goal was increasing student involvement, since scholarship revealed the linkage between student involvement, student learning, and retention.

The Learning Communities Program at Temple University began with a grant from Pew Charitable Trusts. When we began we were well funded and were supported by a core group of faculty and academic departments from across the University that were interested in learning communities. When deciding which model of learning communities to adopt, we marveled at the potential of models in place at other schools, such as Evergreen State College in Washington. The attractiveness of these other models, however, hindered our work; we established course linkages that were too elaborate for our setting. We either linked non-required courses that attracted faculty but not students, or used courses that were not appropriate for entering freshmen.

After a pilot year (1993) in which we were forced to cancel clusters of three- or four-course communities due to lack of student interest, we selected a less complicated linked course model and began pairing staples in the first-year Core curriculum offerings: first-year writing, finite math, general chemistry, history, psychology, and other social sciences. We work with academic departments and undergraduate colleges to create pairs which link introductory courses in the major with general education requirements or two general education offerings, one of which is typically a first-year writing courses. Recently we began including sections of the freshman seminar in our linkages.

In our program, "learning community faculty" refers to the professors, part-time instructors, and graduate students that teach in the program. These individuals come together in summer workshops to share teaching philosophies, discuss teaching goals, and exchange syllabi. While the workshops feature a formal agenda of sessions on pedagogy, assessment, and student development theory, it is the informal conversations about teaching that faculty find the most useful. It is at these workshops that faculty first meet the individuals with whom their courses will be paired to form a learning community.

Overall, assessment data is positive. Over 55 percent of the entering freshmen class enrolls in learning communities. Learning communities students are retained at higher rates and earn higher grades in critical first-year courses such as composition, math, and chemistry than non-participants. Our students are more satisfied with the Temple experience and more likely to engage in out-of-class learning activities such as forming study groups or visiting a professor during office hours than non-participants.

An on-going challenge is maintaining quality and consistency in terms of curricular integration across the forty-five linked course communities we offer. In terms of structure, our communities closely resemble linked course learning communities at other institutions, but for us one question remains unanswered: "Are all learning communities students experiencing interdisciplinary or even integrated learning?"

Some teachers report that they work closely with their colleague teaching the other course in the community. They share readings, give common assignments, and integrate course content across both courses. In other communities, however, students' only experience enhanced social connections. While this is an important achievement on a large and often impersonal campus, it is not quite what we were hoping for in terms of an enhanced teaching and learning environment.

As we enter into year eight of our work, we renew our commitment to improving teaching and learning at the freshmen level. We recently expanded the number of freshman seminar sections (a new student experience course), linking the majority of these sections to learning communities. We now offer students more of a cluster experience that includes two discipline courses clustered with a freshmen seminar. We wrote a faculty handbook that we distributed at summer workshops and posted on our website. The handbook includes a community plan worksheet which we ask faculty teams to submit prior to the start of the semester. The plan requires teams to develop goals, activities, and a list of intended outcomes for students' learning experience. Fall 1999 plans and post-semester faculty reflection essays will be used to revise the faculty handbook and to plan future faculty development events.

The traditional definition of a learning community cited earlier in this essay appropriately describes the learning communities at Temple University. As we work toward meeting the expectations of the definition, particularly the goal of fostering "more explicit intellectual connections," we have been challenged, if not restrained, by problems associated with Temple's urban nature. These problems include periods of declining enrollments, shrinking budget resources, increased teaching loads and class size, a faculty reward structure that does not value cross-college or even cross-department intellectual activity, busy student lives, busy faculty lives, and a myriad of archaic bureaucratic process that are slow to change. But we move forward and watch and wait for an opportunity to expand in new directions while continuing to improve the quality of teaching and learning in our current communities.

Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis

The IUPUI Learning Community Program was initiated in 1995 and was based on the research of Astin, Tinto, MacGregor, and others. Nevertheless, the learning community model developed at IUPUI is only loosely based on the more commonly accepted definition of learning communities. Among our Russ partner institutions, the IUPUI program design falls in the middle between Temple's more traditional model and Portland State's novel approach.

The faculty and administrative staff who established learning communities recognized from the beginning that the IUPUI model would be different from most learning community programs in the country. The first and most critical decision made in the formation of the program was to ensure that it was faculty-driven. A number of successful learning community programs throughout the nation are coordinated by counseling personnel, residential hall staff, or student affairs units. Faculty ownership at IUPUI, however, was essential if the program was to be successful.

IUPUI is a uniquely structured organization. Not only was it formed in 1969 by two separate universities, Indiana University and Purdue University, but also the fifteen undergraduate schools on the IUPUI campus have different histories, missions, and cultures. Some schools, for example, operate as system schools (with programs on all the Indiana University campuses), some as merged schools (operating on the Bloomington and Indianapolis campuses only), and some as independent schools that can be found only at Indianapolis. An additional complicating factor is the IUPUI financial structure, which follows a responsibility-centered management model, with each school responsible for generating its own income. The decentralization of IUPUI, therefore, was a major factor to be considered in the development of the new learning community program. The only way to ensure that each academic school would support the new program for its undergraduates was to place the development of learning communities in faculty hands and control of the courses in the academic schools.

The IUPUI Learning Community Program initiative needed to be faculty-driven for yet another reason. The majority of IUPUI freshmen are first-generation college students—61 percent of the entering fall class in 1999 were first-generation. Many come to the campus hoping to obtain college degrees to ensure good jobs and high salaries. They have little understanding of academic expectations or opportunities. Few are actively engaged in learning. As one faculty member stated, "If I offered college degrees on the first day of class for a sum of money, I would have many takers." In other words, many students come to college to be certified for a profession. They do not understand how personally rewarding the college experience can be. The best people to introduce new students to collegiate academic expectations, as well as to the many opportunities afforded by a college education, are the faculty. Large, impersonal lecture classes do not offer sufficient opportunities for faculty members to engage freshmen in personal conversations. Small learning community classes, however, provide such an environment. At IUPUI, therefore, members of the resident faculty teach a large percentage of the learning community sections.

The learning community program had grown significantly by spring semester, 1997, but it also faced a new challenge. The courses were recommended but not required. The number of learning community sections exceeded the number of students interested in the courses, and several sections had to be cancelled. By fall 1997 the program administrators had to decide to either limit the growth of the program and thereby the number of students who would benefit from it, or add a significant number of learning community sections and mandate enrollment.

A compromise was reached, and in the fall semester 1997, learning community enrollment was mandated for all conditionally admitted freshmen. By fall semester, 1999, however, enough sessions were offered to ensure a place for most entering students, and learning community enrollment was mandated for approximately 90 percent of beginning freshmen and transfers with fewer than eighteen hours. As of fall semester 2000, at least three of the largest undergraduate schools will require learning community courses as part of their graduation requirements. The decision to mandate enrollment has become one of the distinguishing characteristics of the IUPUI Learning Community Program since most programs in the nation recommend learning community enrollment but do not require it.

A campus-wide committee was established to oversee the growing program, with faculty and administrative representation from most of the undergraduate schools on the campus. In 1997, IUPUI formed a new unit, University College, to improve services for entering students. University College became the coordinating unit for the IUPUI Learning Community Program and home to the First-Year Studies Committee, which was charged with the responsibility for overseeing the program. In 1998, the committee developed a template of learning goals and objectives, which now serves as the core curricular base for all learning communities on the campus.

Most learning community programs at other institutions link at least two discipline-based courses. Many add a first-year seminar to the linked sections to form a block of classes for entering students. At IUPUI, course linkage is complicated for several reasons. First, most IUPUI students live and work in the greater Indianapolis area. Additionally, many have demanding family obligations. Students rarely have the necessary flexibility in their daily lives that would allow them to enroll in block courses. They must arrange their collegiate courses around their jobs, their commute to school, and their family obligations. Block course scheduling, therefore, does not work well for many IUPUI students.

In addition, IUPUI does not have a general education program for all students. Although the Schools of Science and Liberal Arts have agreed on a general education plan, most of the professional schools do not follow it. There is, therefore, only one course that all freshmen take. IUPUI also offers over 180 different majors. The vast array of majors, with their wide variety of curricular plans, is an additional reason why block scheduling for learning communities has not worked at IUPUI.

A different model was established for the IUPUI Learning Community Program in order to provide a sense of community for entering students whose personal schedules make block enrollment difficult. The primary component of the IUPUI learning community model is a one or two credit first-year-seminar course taught by an instructional team. Many of those seminars are linked to a discipline-based course in the major or to a general education course. Often, the same faculty member teaches the discipline-based course and the seminar. The most unique feature of the model, however, is the instructional team concept.

Since IUPUI freshmen cannot easily form connections with other students and with the institution by attending a variety of classes together in a block schedule, the instructional team model offers an alternative by creating a community for them. The instructional team in each learning community is composed of a faculty member, a librarian, an academic advisor, and a student mentor. Enrollment in the learning community sections is limited to twenty-five students, and most members of the instructional team attend every class. The students and their instructional team members, therefore, establish close and supportive relationships. Entering students are encouraged to maintain these connections throughout their freshman year. To help ensure that the personal connections are maintained, the campus has reorganized the freshman registration process. Freshmen now register together in their learning community sections for their second semester, with the support of their instructional team members. Many enroll in courses together for second semester. In addition, many more freshmen registered early for the next semester. The first week of registration for freshmen for fall 1999, for example, showed an increase of 26 percent as a result of the new registration process.

The IUPUI Learning Community Program has been successful. Students enrolled in learning community sections are retained at a higher rate, and they have made more As and Bs and fewer Ds and Fs in their other courses than freshmen that were not enrolled. For the last two years, therefore, efforts have been underway to expand the IUPUI Learning Community Program to provide the benefits of the program to all students. In fall semester 1999, there were 108 learning community sections serving over 2,600 students. The size of the IUPUI Learning

Community Program and the number of students served not only make it a complicated operation, but also ensure that it is one of the largest learning community programs in the country. Because IUPUI incorporates an instructional team approach, the number of personnel associated with the program is also larger than at most institutions. The size and complexity of the IUPUI Learning Community Program reflect the needs of entering students at the institution and help to distinguish the program from those sponsored by other universities.

Conclusion

When we began this essay we projected that we would be working toward a common definition that would appropriately and equitably describe the programs at IUPUI, Portland State and Temple. But as our work progressed one of our major insights was that learning communities need to be specifically tailored to particular sites. What seemed most effective as an opening frame of reference was the importance of creating a community of learners to improve student learning. So instead of forcing our programs to "fit" into narrower definitions of "learning community," we hope that we have added to the richness of the learning communities literature by demonstrating how different can mean more in terms of improving student learning and creating community on urban campuses.

Note: In lieu of a list of cited works, we are providing a learning communities bibliography as an appendix to our essay. The works cited in our essay can be found in the bibliography along with other valuable sources of information.

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Sustaining a Grant Partnership: Personal Reflections on the Powers and Perils of Collaboration

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Scott Evenbeck, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis
Nancy Hoffman, Brown University
Charles White, Portland State University

Restructuring for Urban Student Success, RUSS, is a partnership of Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), Portland State University, and Temple University. Administrators, faculty, staff, graduate students, and undergraduates on each campus participate in the project's activities. Leadership for the project comes from a core group of individuals, all of who have been associated with the grant since its inception, who work closely with the project convener.

The project's identity has been deeply influenced by the organizational styles and education philosophies of the principal investigator on each campus: At IUPUI, Scott Evenbeck, Dean of University College; Charles White, Associate Dean for University Studies, who initially led Portland's States involvement and now shares the work with Judy Patton, Director of University Studies; and Jodi Levine, Assistant Vice Provost for University Studies at Temple University. These three individuals volunteered to join Convener Nancy Hoffman in the writing of an essay reflecting on the "powers and perils" of collaboration. In this essay we address what engaging in this collaborative essay meant to our respective campuses and why each of us agreed to join the project. We discuss the challenges involved with the collaboration and offer what we

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consider the principles of success required to make a collaborative project like RUSS worth the investment.

Reflections from the Partners

To prepare for the writing of this essay, Evenbeck, White, Levine, and Hoffman each composed a letter to the partners. The letters were part reflection, part catharsis, with an underlying tone of appreciation for the work of the partners. The spirit and context of these letters reflected an awareness of both the strengths and weaknesses of the partnership, and from them two themes emerged: each of us were very grateful to be partnered with the others in this important work, and each readily admitted that managing a partnership across urban institutions with related goals but unique cultures was quite difficult. From reading the letters we did not learn anything new about the partnership or gain new insights as this group has never been shy about expressing individual and/or collective joys and frustrations, the writing process, however, was an opportunity to reflect on where RUSS has been and where its principal partners hope we may go next.

Coming together: Reasons for Joining RUSS

At the time the grant proposal was developed, all three campuses were in the midst of crafting efforts to reform their undergraduate experience, particularly for entering students. Temple University was completing a three-year grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts to implement learning communities for entering students. IUPUI had built a very successful mentoring program around the principles of Supplemental Instruction and was beginning to organize learning communities through its newly developed team-taught freshman seminar.

Portland State was doing the most extensive restructuring, replacing its former program of general education with the more interdisciplinary University Studies curriculum.

Negotiating who would partner in the collaboration and the roles each campus would play was an awkward, but an important phase of the project. The idea of a multi-institution project came from The Pew Charitable Trusts. A development officer from the University of Houston[1] approached Pew about its grant-making activities in the area of learning communities and was referred to The Learning Communities Program at Temple. After teams from Temple and Houston visited each other's institutions, it became apparent that we had a good deal to learn from each other. On advice from Pew, Houston and Temple contacted Portland State to learn more about their work. Representatives from the newly formed group of three campuses then descended on IUPUI to determine their suitability and interest in joining a potential grant project. With Temple representing the northeast, Portland the west, and Houston the south, IUPUI was a logical partner to represent the Midwest.

IUPUI was somewhat surprised that they had been invited into the partnership, since at the time they were originally contacted about joining the group they felt they only had remote chance of being invited into the partnership. They attributed their selection to the good work they were already doing in the areas of promoting student success.

> By the end of the day, the visitors articulated a strong commitment to our inclusion in the project. I think their turn-around, if my perception is grounded in reality, was a function of their seeing the enormous vitality and effectiveness of our student-designed and student-delivered and student-assessed program of supplemental instruction (Scott Evenbeck, personal communication, February 2000).

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[1] Houston was involved with the original grant proposal to the Pew Charitable Trusts. Changes in both central administration and leadership of its Scholar's Community program led to Houston's departure from the project.

The idea of learning more about each other before agreeing to enter into a partnership created a positive group dynamic even before the ink on the grant proposal was dry. The campus representatives involved in the development of the project quickly began to appreciate the unique gifts and contributions each campus could bring to the project and a genuine fondness and collegial camaraderie began to grow among the participants. We felt good about our own work, each other, and the future of RUSS.

The actual writing of the grant was an important part of the collaboration. The partners quickly realized the power of collaboration in large group planning conversations about the potential shape of this project. During a conversation in a Chicago hotel room, the group produced a matrix that contained each campus' self-evaluated progress in key areas of undergraduate education, including faculty development, curricular reform, assessment, and student affairs/academic affairs partnerships. The group looked not only at where each campus stood in terms of its reform goals, but also what our collaborative work might look like if we merged our agendas. "The proposal writing process was an opportunity for each of us to think through the value as well as the costs of working with other institutions" (Charles White, personal communication, December 1999).

The proposal reflected our individual and shared commitments to curricular and structural reform and centered on the effectiveness of key initiatives, like learning communities, which were already in place. Early on we knew this project would require a tremendous investment of energy. The partnership would be made a priority on each campus, but local efforts would continue to demand our time and attention. Whenever we were asked to describe how we would move ahead with the project we always added the phrase "Both individually and collectively…."

The grant provided additional resources for each campus, but more importantly it bestowed external validation on our local efforts. Charles White reflects on Portland State's joining RUSS:

> What I did not fully understand at that time was that even more important than the funds was the external validation that has been woven throughout our collaboration. The connection with Temple and IUPUI as much as the recognition by the Pew Charitable Trusts has been a significant element contributing to our progress at Portland State University.

External validation, and the opportunity to exchange ideas with colleagues at other urban universities engaged in related work, motivated Temple to join this project:

> We needed to learn from like institutions who could understand our challenges of faculty buy-in, limited resources, complex institutional cultures, gaps between academic and student affairs, accountability pressures, and a student body diverse in terms of academic preparation and motivation for college (Jodi Levine, personal communication, January 2000.)

A "think tank" is an important aspect of any collaborative project. Whether in informal or formal environments, opportunities to exchange ideas—the "show and tell" features of a partnership—help us learn the most from each other. Already motivated by our beliefs that we do good work, a strong desire to learn from each other, and the recognition of shared values, we used these exchanges to create a broader agenda for the RUSS project.

Staying together: Challenges to Collaboration

The further away we moved from the proposal-writing phase of the project, the more we began to see the project in different ways. "The notion of working collaboratively on common goals is, for a number of reasons, extremely difficult to move from theory and planning to practice" (Charles White, personal communication, December 1999). Beyond differences in opinion, which should be expected, the RUSS team experienced the constant flux associated with life at three urban institutions. Two of the contributing authors of the actual grant document left RUSS partner campuses to take positions at other universities. The three principal investigators all had changes in their job descriptions. Temple and Portland State had leadership changes in the Provost's and/or President's offices. IUPUI formed University College.

Administrative and faculty life at urban universities is dynamic and complex. At different times each campus went through periods of difficulty in terms of sustaining the focus on RUSS. As a result, we had trouble maintaining the project's identity. This is where the role of a convener is crucial. A coordinator who is not located on a partner campus can be extremely helpful in keeping a group on task.

Balancing local demands with partnership needs is a challenge to collaboration, as is building an appropriate local team to engage in project activities. A risk common to work of this kind is that the grant will become the property and/or responsibility of one person as opposed to a campus team. In part, this is a reflection of the organizational culture of each institution. As Jodi Levine describes:

> I clearly did not have the extensive RUSS team that other partners brought to RUSS events and planning meetings. I did not do enough at the beginning of the project to involve more faculty. The Temple-RUSS group of faculty and administrators were interested participants that met routinely and contributed ideas to the project, but they were not sustained partners in the work.

The primary partners in this project each struggled to find a place for the project among so many other obligations. Coming together—electronically, by phone, or in person—was a logistical challenge. "Despite our individual and collective commitment to the use of technology we have found no substitute for being together and talking things through as we have looked at our own work and that of one another in Restructuring for Urban Student Success" (Scott Evenbeck, personal communication, February 2000).

The further we moved into the project the more apparent differences in our individual work styles became, as did differences in our visions and agendas for changes in the urban college experience. A "growing pain" that would come to define the final phase of this grant was that the partners were not as alike as we had originally thought. As Scott Evenbeck notes:

> Persons and individuals bring different and sometimes conflicting assumptions and practices and styles to any work. Hard as it might be to understand, I think we still don't fully even define 'learning community' in the same way though each of the three partners has strong local and national recognition for our respective approaches to this important work.

Moving forward together: Principles for Success in Collaborative Work

The personal letters we exchanged in preparation for this essay all contained clear expressions of gratitude. Respecting and valuing both the individuals in the partnership and the partnership itself is perhaps the single most important element necessary for a collaboration to succeed. While we discussed our different administrative styles as an occasional obstacle to this success, interpersonal relationships are also an important component of the work. The mutual respect and admiration we have for each other is apparent when we talk about RUSS and the individuals engaged in this work. As Scott Evenbeck proclaimed, "Collaboration is fun."

Recognizing that each campus faces specific institutional challenges, and that no one site's needs are greater or lesser than another, is an important aspect of the partnerships dynamic. Staying connected through planned, periodic, in-person meetings allows the group to not only stay connected and focused on group goals, but also to stay in touch with the individual and organizational changes occurring on each campus.

"Group talk" is healthy, but conversations can easily turn away from the conversation at hand, particularly as partners become more familiar and interested in each other's professional and personal lives. Central leadership, another important principle for success, keeps the conversation balanced between what sometimes seemed like "group therapy" and actual project goals. The RUSS convener, Nancy Hoffman, and the project research assistant, Heather Woodcock-Ayres, are important collaborators in this work. They fill vital administrative roles, but also contribute to the dialogue and scholarship this project has produced.

Selecting the convener was an important activity for the partners and was one of our first true collaborative decisions. We offer this advice to others designing collaborative projects: "It is also clear that the person selected to be national convener or director needs a background and expertise related to the goals of the collaborative. The RUSS partners would not have benefited or been successful with someone who did not share the language or values of the initiatives undertaken by these three institutions" (Charles White, personal communication, December 1999).

Widening the circle is also important. The RUSS project has been very visible on all three campuses. The site visits provided important opportunities for faculty and staff development at each institution. (See the Hoffman/Ayres introductory essay for more information on the RUSS project activities.) We were able to bring recognized leaders in the field, such as Peter Ewell, Carol Schneider, Roberta Matthews, and James Honan to our campuses. Through RUSS activities we have been able to involve more faculty in our first-year programs and curricular restructuring activities. RUSS language and products, like our site visit reports, have made their way into the broader campus activities such as academic planning, accreditation reviews and other outside grant activities, including the Urban Portfolio Project.

Dissemination and scholarly activity are a mark of a successful collaboration. Throughout the project, RUSS members have individually and collectively contributed work to the literature on learning communities, assessment, curricular reform, organizational restructuring, and faculty roles. We have invited faculty on our campuses to write and present with us. "These activities have been very important in translating faculty contributions into the language of the academic: scholarship" (Charles White, personal communication, December 1999).

Focusing on what is not working is sometimes more helpful than concentrating on one's accomplishments particularly when we think about future endeavors. A successful collaborative will, from the onset, be thinking ahead to the next project. It is clear from our letters to the partners that this group is committed to a long-term relationship and to learning from each other beyond the life of this grant. This notion of "saving up" for the next project helped prevent the RUSS group from trying to accomplish too much within the limited resources of a three year, multi-campus grant. As described by Scott Evenbeck:

> Often a group will use a "parking lot" to identify issues that are related but about which there is not time to attend in a session. We RUSS partners have put a lot in our parking lot, and are looking forward to ongoing joint work in addressing additional questions.

Conclusion: Reflections from the Convener

My colleagues have pointed out correctly two important kinds of work for a convener: to bring a national perspective to the collaboration and to keep a widely dispersed group on task.

The convener helps the group see the big picture; that is, she reflects back to the group the essence of their conversation and challenges and questions them. She can also try out new conceptualizations of their work. For example, in the invitation to our final RUSS conference I wrote, "Working together, the RUSS partners have developed voluntary self-study and assessment practices which make public the challenges and successes we are having in improving undergraduate education." This is not the mission as we stated it in our grant proposal, nor is it an idea that I arrived at alone. Rather, I had come to these phrases listening to and facilitating RUSS conversations, and had tested out this conceptualization within the group. Putting the words on paper was a final step in a consensus building, and direction setting process.

It is an understatement to say that second kind of work--keeping RUSS on task and on deadline-- is less intellectually challenging than the task of conceptualizing. Yet, this may be the more critical kind of work for a convener. The convener provides accountability both to the funder and among the partners. She can instill a sense of confidence that each campus is moving ahead with its responsibilities at roughly at the same pace, and that the project goals are being met. In my case, working with a graduate assistant, I managed the budget, wrote the annual reports to the Pew Charitable Trusts and other official documents, set the agenda for our meetings, and scheduled conference calls between our face-to-face discussions to keep the group in touch and on track. In addition, I chaired our meetings-- sometimes for two days at a time-- allowing my colleagues much needed time NOT to be running the show as they did in their everyday lives, but to be reflecting and brainstorming.

So to end these brief reflections, I want to step back from these two kinds of tasks to say a word about my colleagues and the pleasure of working with them. RUSS works at the grassroots. My colleagues are not provosts and presidents [yet], but deans and assistant deans, staff, advisors, researchers and faculty. While most of the group regularly speaks at national conferences and at other universities about RUSS work, they have not got guru status [yet]. They work directly with students, negotiating and renegotiating their program goals, arguing for resources, researching the toughest questions about learning sometimes in indifferent, unappreciative, or hostile environments. They are not just student-centered, but tough student-centered; and their ambitions-- as I can fathom them-- lie in staying tough student centered. They care deeply about access and success of urban students, and their constancy has made this work worthwhile.

Reflections on the Development of An Entering Student Survey for Urban Universities

Heather Woodcock Ayres
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James Degnan
Kathi A. Ketcheson

Abstract: The data sharing opportunities presented by the RUSS partnership led to the idea of a RUSS Entering Student Survey. The survey was conceived of as a way to create for external audiences, a more richly defined picture of students entering urban public universities and for internal audiences, data to inform campus reforms. Apart from establishing a basis for defining the characteristics of urban students, the process of creating the survey has highlighted similarities and differences in the philosophies, organizational structures, and faculty compositions of the three partner institutions. In developing the Entering Student Survey we may not have fully considered the concept "urban" as it relates to program restructuring at all metropolitan universities. We believed that the data derived from an omnibus survey would improve our ability to measure the effects of common restructuring and program change initiatives at metropolitan universities. We have abandoned our one-size-fits-all approach to survey development and have adopted a modular set of core items which we believe will better support our research in ways that could not be obtained from existing instruments. In this essay we examine what we have learned from the process of collaborating on this project.

In the past several decades, conceptions of equality of educational opportunity have been transformed. Equity defined in terms of access to higher education has been eclipsed by expectations that all students are availed educational conditions, which support their achievement. In her discussion of the RUSS project, Nancy Hoffman reinforces this view when she explains that the RUSS partners not only share a goal of improving outcomes for entering

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students but also changing urban universities to attend permanently to the needs of their evolving undergraduate populations.

The RUSS group of urban public universities has come together because they share a common perspective and contend with common challenges. Recognizing the limits of traditional education delivery systems, these universities are attempting to restructure their undergraduate programs to more effectively engage a new generation of urban students. Cross-disciplinary learning communities, advising programs specifically designed for the undeclared student, peer tutoring, resource centers whose missions are to improve students' skills in writing, mathematics, and science, and joint venture transition programs between high schools and colleges are examples of the new structures that have been put into place to help students actualize their potentials by becoming effective agents in their own education.

In the process of initiating these reforms and examining students' responses to new programs, however, the RUSS partners have also become keenly aware of the complex task involved in communicating students' diverse needs to faculty members and student affairs professionals. If programs such as advising, student services, housing, and financial aid are to be modified to meet the diverse circumstances represented by an increasingly non-traditional student body, faculty and student affair professionals in urban public universities require information about the specific concerns and aspirations of their students. Moreover, reforms that ask faculty and staff to assume new roles and responsibilities with students can rub against the grain of traditional practices and engender controversy. To be successful, restructuring efforts must, therefore, be accompanied by well-designed and well-controlled studies to evaluate the effectiveness of new or proposed programs upon student learning and adjustment to college.

Thoughtfully crafted questions that yield baseline information on students' pre-college experiences are often a key component in the design of useful studies.

The data sharing opportunities presented by the RUSS partnership led to the idea of a RUSS Entering Student Survey. The survey was conceived of as a way to create for external audiences, a more richly defined picture of students entering urban public universities and for internal audiences, data to leverage campus change. A survey to collect comparative data would offer universities a broader description of educational expectations and challenges which urban university students anticipate as they adjust to their new roles as undergraduates. The survey, like the self-study/peer review process, was envisioned as a tool to help leverage change.

Over the life of the RUSS grant, the directors of institutional research (led by Portland State University) engaged faculty and administrators from all three campuses in designing, pre-testing, analyzing and refining an entering student questionnaire. The eventual product of this aspect of the RUSS project is an evolving set of questionnaire items that may be used by other urban and metropolitan universities to assist in describing their diverse new student populations. The techniques used to develop, pilot and validate the items and results of their preliminary administration at IUPUI, Portland State and Temple University are described in earlier writings (Torres, Glode, Ketcheson & Truxillo, 1999). In this essay, the process of developing the questionnaire items is examined from a slightly different perspective. Here, the premises and lessons learned from jointly designing items and collecting comparable data on the three RUSS campuses is discussed in light of the initial survey findings and recommendations for further research.

The rationale for developing an Entering Student Survey

National data indicate that the "typical" student profile is actually becoming more like the urban student profile (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1998). Even so, traditional images of college students tend to persist in the minds of policy makers (Dey & Hurtado, 1999) along with images of traditional four-year liberal arts college or universities (Ewell, 1991). This is problematic because as Clifford Adelman points out, policies built on traditional images of the college population impede educators from serving a more diverse student population to the best of their abilities (American Council on Education, 1999).

In their 1994 study, Kuh, Vesper, and Krebiel reviewed research comparing the relationship between background characteristics and learning gains among students enrolled at traditional and metropolitan universities. Applying a general model developed by Pascarella (1985), these researchers determined that certain variables (e.g., effort) directly affected both learning and personal development among students from both traditional and metropolitan universities. This finding of comparability was important, but also qualified. As Kuh also found, information available mostly from the College Student Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ) data, placed limits on the ability to fully explore these research questions. As Kuh (1994) wrote:

> The CSEQ (and many other instruments) do not ask the right questions of metropolitan university students. For example, although the CSEQ is an excellent tool for assessing effort and gains for traditional age students at residential colleges, it does not take into account the effort metropolitan university students devote to off-campus activities (work, church, community service) nor what students gain from their participation in them. (p. 31).

To address the recognized need for better data on nontraditional students, the RUSS grant proposed that the partner institutions would begin work on a new survey with questions tailored to metropolitan university contexts. Initially, a series of meetings were held among the RUSS institutions and members of the Pew Charitable Trusts. The goals of these meetings were to develop a conceptual framework for a new Urban Student Survey, to review existing instruments for relevance, to build a prototype questionnaire and pilot test items at the three institutions, and to review the results of the pilot questionnaire.

Considering the limits of prior research

Research on the factors associated with undergraduate academic success tends to focus on the background characteristics of students and the types of institutions they attend. While age, race, and gender variables often correlate with retention and graduation rates, demographic characteristics may not be as strongly related to student success as factors such as students' choice of college, programs of study, and student course loads (McHewitt, 1993). Moreover, measures related to students' levels of social and academic integration often transcend previous academic and demographic variables as effective predictors of student success (Tinto 1975; Pascarella and Chapman, 1983, Pascarella, Duby, and Iverson, 1983; and Kuh, Vesper, and Krehbiel, 1988). Factors such as the opportunities available within an urban area also affect student success (Pace, 1991). Student differences within colleges oftentimes are greater than the differences between colleges. Research conducted by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) indicate that "within-college" differences in student learning are typically greater than "between-college" differences. Between-college effects refer to differences in gains in learning related to the kind of institution attended (e.g., residential liberal arts, metropolitan university), whereas within-college effects represent changes attributable to differences in the experiences of students on any given campus (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991).

To address the limits of earlier research and build from existing instruments, a group of PSU faculty assumed responsibility for the initial task of creating a pilot questionnaire with items organized into three broad categories: demographics, expectations of college, and student values. Representatives from Temple, IUPUI and Portland State met to assess the overall coherence of the pilot instrument and individual items -- taking into account the individual interests and contextual features of their own institutions and urban universities in general. In fall 1998, the RUSS institutions administered the pilot questionnaires either to the entire freshman class (Portland State University) or to a sample of new freshman (IUPUI and Temple University). Results from the pilot administrations were compiled and initial findings were shared in meetings of faculty and administrators at each institution. The meetings offered faculty and administrators a unique forum to convene with institutional researchers in order to not only review preliminary results and discuss the relevance of individual questionnaire items, but also engage in focused conversations about the kind of information that could help inform their work with entering students.

Preliminary findings

Analysis of the fall 1998 Entering Student Survey indicated that the entering students from the three universities shared much in common. In all three schools most students worked for pay during the school year, and most expressed concerns about funding their education. Measures of student background characteristics, aspirations, and expectations showed remarkable similarities. Yet there were also large differences in the entering classes at the three universities. Less than 50% of students at Portland State and IUPUI applied to at least one other college while 84% of Temple students had also applied elsewhere. Most of Temple's Fall 1998 entering freshman class resided in a university owned housing compared to 24% of the freshmen at Portland State and less than 1% of the freshmen at IUPUI.

It bears emphasizing that prior to the development of joint survey instrument, all three universities had mechanisms in place to collect data from entering students. In other words, the RUSS questionnaire represented data collection efforts over and above each individual institution's existing research agenda. As such, subscribing to a common questionnaire implied that in some instances institutions might be faced with giving up historical data. This prompted directors of institutional research to confer with academic personnel and to think carefully about how much data and what forms of data were really most useful to collect and share. What new information could a compilation of joint survey items offer the campuses, which would help distinguish their urban student population and also enrich existing data collection efforts by making additional comparative data available to improve programs for entering students?

A common instrument or common items?

Following a series of conversations focused on these considerations, the RUSS group agreed that the best solution would be to identify a set of core items from the pilot questionnaire. Items would be included in the core on the basis of their ability to provide valuable comparative information for metropolitan universities. The first version of these items was administered to the entering fall 1999 freshmen at two of the institutions. The partners are now reviewing the effectiveness of the core items as they relate to student learning and success at the three institutions. Within the next year we hope to be able to recommend a core battery of items for use by metropolitan universities.

Considering the RUSS partners' collective interest in learning from comparable data but also needing to address institution specific considerations, a core battery of common items for use by metropolitan universities provides what appears to be a viable solution. By circulating shared "urban" items and combining these with campus-specific items, the group retains its ability to find out what qualities newly enrolled urban students have in common but also document the multiversity that exists within each university.

What does it mean to urban public university peers?

Apart from establishing a basis for defining the characteristics of urban students, the process of creating the survey has highlighted similarities and differences in the philosophies, organizational structures, and faculty compositions of the three partner institutions. We are metropolitan universities and we share a common philosophy of welcoming the surrounding metropolitan region as an integral if not primary reason for our existence. Each of us is the largest receiver of the metropolitan area's college going population and the student body at each institution reflects the population of our metropolitan area. We are committed to outreach activities and to the delivery of programs which stress success for all students. On the basis of our distinctive urban mission, we were attracted to one another as peer institutions and have provided one another with valuable insights because we share this common contextual understanding.

However, our institutions differ substantially, as well. Of the three institutions, two have medical or law schools, one has a population that consists of 45% ethnic minorities, and at least one admits large numbers of students requiring remedial or developmental courses. The institutions range in enrollment from more than 27,000 to 16,000. Two are categorized as

Carnegie Doctoral II institutions, while one is classified as Research I. Differences in our students, faculty, organizational structures and campus cultures warrant and necessitate unique approaches to data gathering.

Because of the RUSS Project we have learned from each other and have adopted common strategies and structures that have helped us to advance our common mission as metropolitan universities. Nevertheless, this project has reinforced the principle that we must be careful not to address the academic, motivational, and service needs of our students solely from the perspective of the "Urban University." The differences in life experiences of students and faculty at each of our universities require that we tweak programs and structures to fit the unique qualities of the populations we serve.

Indeed, our preliminary research indicates that there may be greater differences in student demographic characteristics, expectations, and prior academic histories within each university than there are across the three partner universities. Thus, our task, in addition to developing a basis for knowing how well restructuring has worked across metropolitan universities is organizing a research agenda which will improve our understanding of the dynamics of change among specific audiences within each of our universities.

Implications for institutional research

The three partner institutions are more similar to each other than they are to other universities in their own geographic areas, yet they do not easily fit into a single institutional category. The unique characteristics of the "urbanness" of Indianapolis, Philadelphia, and Portland along with the curricular, social, and historical differences associated with each institution prevent us and other urban universities from using one instrument that will satisfy the needs of all institutions. We began with the assumption that we were very similar institutions and we have come to realize that we differ in many important ways. Different data are needed by each institution to develop formative evaluation strategies and the one-size model that we thought was appropriate at the beginning no longer fits. We will continue to develop a set of common structures—the core items--that will allow us and other "urbans" to compare and benchmark our progress. Nevertheless, we now realize that obtaining comparative data, though important, is not as essential as the development and implementation of shared methods and approaches for measuring, interpreting, and disseminating information about the effects that our restructured programs have had upon insuring student success. We will continue to work together on the above mentioned items with the intention of collaborating on research projects and sharing information about practices that we have found to work best across our institutions (e.g., Learning Communities, peer teaching, restructuring, etc.) and to determine those practices which work best within a single institution.

Conclusion

In developing the Entering Student Survey we may not have fully considered the concept "urban" as it relates to program restructuring at all metropolitan universities. We began with the premise that a new questionnaire was needed that would completely describe the urban student population at metropolitan universities. We believed that the data derived from an omnibus survey would provide a richer context for measuring the effects of common restructuring and program change initiatives at metropolitan universities. We have abandoned our one-size-fits-all approach to survey development and have adopted a modular set of core items which we believe will better support our research in ways that could not be obtained from existing instruments.

We are in the process of evaluating the effectiveness of the core-items. Moreover, we have changed parts of our sophomore and upper division student surveys in ways that will allow us to measure changes in students' expectations and beliefs over time. We will continue to refine our *research questions* so that the Entering Student Survey project better fits within the larger context of institutional research. From our current vantage point, we see that the Entering Student Survey project has enabled us to focus our research agenda on the following new questions:

> What do faculties need to know about students that will help them to improve student learning and engagement?
>
> - What are the factors that engage different student audiences?
> - What is the best method for communicating information to different audiences of students, faculty, and administration?
> - How do we strengthen teaching skills and delivery systems to address unique student audiences?
>
> What are the baseline indicators that will provide metropolitan university faculties and administrators with the information they need to measure the effects of change?
>
> - Because restructuring generates controversy, how does data from an entering student survey inform practice and allow for the development of methods for measuring the effects brought about by changes in policies and procedures?
>
> How do we use and communicate information to and from our urban partners (school districts, community colleges, etc.)?
>
> - How do we develop feedback structures to give and receive information from our partners?

To be sure, the roles of institutional researchers are expanding as faculty and administrators seek their guidance collecting formative information to assess and strengthen new approaches to instruction. The Entering Student Survey project provides one interesting collaborative model for examining data on our students within and across campuses. We will continue to consider whether the results obtained from the new questionnaire items provide the kind of data needed to improve the effectiveness of programs relative to results obtained from traditional questionnaires or other forms of data collection. The good news is that we have gained a much stronger understanding of ourselves and have developed a helpful working relationship that has led to progress and further cooperation. Our preliminary work has provided information to support the learning theories that formed the framework of the survey's project original design plan. Ongoing research projects will provide us with core items that most metropolitan universities will find of value for describing their entering student classes and a valuable forum for discussing the sort of baseline data on students that will help them to monitor the effectiveness of their undergraduate programs.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE IUPUI RUSS ESSAYS

Barbara Jackson

These ten essays reflect both the process and outcomes of significant institutional transformation. At IUPUI, unlike most universities, the establishment of professional and graduate programs preceded the development of a comprehensive undergraduate curriculum. In recent years we have focused our attention on creating support programs for entering students that utilize national research findings and the best practices of our urban counterparts. The RUSS collaboration has been an important factor in our commitment to learning communities as a foundational element of a first year program for IUPUI students.

Gayle Williams provides an institutional context for all of the IUPUI essays and describes our response to the challenges of maintaining both consistency of student experience and flexibility in meeting heterogeneous student and discipline needs. A key element of this strategy has been the development of a "Template for First Year Seminars," which provides a common core of learning outcomes that all learning communities subscribe to. The way in which a particular school has developed a model to fit the needs of its entering students is the focus of Richard Magjuka's article.

Barbara Jackson describes why faculty ownership of first year learning communities was deemed essential from the start and details our efforts to sustain faculty involvement. The essay by Kevin Robbins illustrates the outcome of "reflective practice," which our faculty development initiatives encourage. Sharon Hamilton provides a specific case study of one of our most successful faculty development initiatives.

The value of involving members of the campus community, in addition to the faculty, in meeting the needs of entering students has resulted in an innovative use of instructional teams. William Orme and Rebecca VanVoorhis present the process and challenges of team formation. Rosalie Vermette, et al. discuss the implications of instructional team participation on the role of academic advisors. Linda Haas evaluates our strategies for incorporating student mentors into instructional teams.

The comprehensive approach to assessment of learning communities that the campus has adopted is overviewed by Victor Borden, while Ann Lowenkron and Richard Magjuka present the results of one specific assessment project.

Learning Communities at IUPUI

Gayle Williams[2]

Abstract: Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) is a large urban campus with a diverse student population. The university has fifteen undergraduate schools and over one hundred and eighty degree programs. IUPUI students who are beginners or transfers with fewer than eighteen hours are required to enroll in a learning community. All IUPUI learning communities follow the same course template, which outlines the learning objectives for students enrolled in those sections, but each of the undergraduate schools also tailors their learning community sections to meet the particular needs of their majors. Providing a learning community experience for each of the over three thousand students who enter into a variety of degree programs at IUPUI each fall is challenging. Ensuring program quality across a large number of schools with individual models is even more difficult. The University College Learning Community Network was formed in 1998 as a forum for representatives from each of the undergraduate schools participating in the IUPUI Learning Community Program. The Network provides the opportunity for learning community liaisons to discuss issues related to the program, to share ideas and concerns, and to receive the latest information on program developments.

IUPUI Overview

Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) is a complex university with a unique history. Formed in 1969 by two separate universities, Indiana and Purdue, IUPUI's fifteen undergraduate schools have different histories and missions, and each school operates in a somewhat autonomous fashion. The focus of the early years was the merger of academic and administrative units. IUPUI became an administrative and academic part of Indiana University with Purdue maintaining academic responsibility for programs offered in science, engineering, and technology. Some of the schools at IUPUI now operate as system schools (with programs on all the Indiana University campuses), some as merged schools (operating on the Bloomington and Indianapolis campuses only), and some as independent schools (at Indianapolis only).

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[2] Gayle Williams, Assistant Dean at IUPUI's University College, coordinates the Learning Community program. She has worked at IUPUI for seven years.

The rapid growth of IUPUI since its inception is reflected in the table below. IUPUI has nearly doubled in size by most measures. Recent trends toward more full-time, traditional-aged students represent a return to earlier year profiles. This trend is due more to demographic and economic factors than to any change in campus focus or program participation rates.

Table 1

Indicator	*1970-71*	*1984-85*	*1998-99*	*% Chg. 1970-98*
Undergraduate Enrollment	10,152	16,990	20,667	104%
Total Enrollment	14,603	23,368	27,821	91%
Credit Hours	155,665	210,853	275,071	77%
First-Time Freshmen	N/A	2,731	3,549	-
Percent Part-time Students	53%	58%	48%	-
Degrees Conferred	1,607	2,585	3,960	146%
Full-Time Faculty	N/A	1,266	1,668	-
Research Expenditures[1]	N/A	$53M	$120M	-
Total Operating Budget[1]	N/A	$601M	$697M	-

[1] Adjusted to 1998 dollars

IUPUI has become Indiana's most comprehensive higher education institution, offering more degree programs than any other school in the state, conferring degrees ranging from associate to doctoral. It has one of the largest professional school enrollments (Medicine, Dentistry, and Law) in the country and includes the country's largest School of Nursing. Moreover, as an urban, commuter university, IUPUI serves a student body that is very demographically, academically, and motivationally diverse. Many of the innovations and improvements of the past decade derived from efforts to better serve this population and, more generally, the Indianapolis metropolitan region in which these students live, work, and raise their families.

In the last decade the campus has become a place of innovation and leadership in higher education. The administration and faculty have worked together to develop centers and programs that make innovative use of technology and foster interdisciplinary collaboration in many contexts. Because of its location in the state capital and largest city in the state, the campus has been able to develop partnerships that have resulted in programs that are mutually beneficial to the city and campus and provide important service to the community.

The IUPUI Entering Student Profile

The remarkable record of growth and achievement at IUPUI has not been matched by increases in student academic achievement and persistence. Since the state of Indiana did not have a community college system, IUPUI and the regional campuses have maintained open admissions. Despite stated admissions criteria—top half of class rank, above the median in combined SAT scores, and a prescribed curriculum of college preparatory courses in high school—IUPUI denies admission to very few students. In fact, two out of three first-time freshman (66%) entering IUPUI in Fall 1999 did not meet the stated admissions criteria (see Table 2).

Table 2

Trends in Qualifications of Beginning Freshmen

	Fall Semesters					
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Average SAT						
IUPUI Total	939	930	926	941	935	944
Direct/Dual Admits	1046	1042	1041	1055	1084	1088
University College Overall	910	902	901	916	909	917
Regular Admits	987	984	1004	1005	1029	1020
Conditional Admits	857	852	855	874	874	879

Average Percentile Rank in High School						
IUPUI Total	52	51	50	50	49	51
Direct/Dual Admits	70	72	71	72	72	74
University College Overall	48	46	46	46	45	47
Regular Admits	65	64	68	68	70	71
Conditional Admits	38	38	38	38	39	40
Number of Beginning Freshmen						
IUPUI Total	1990	2442	2766	2712	3186	3147
Direct/Dual Admits	362	437	416	403	400	432
University College Overall	1628	2005	2350	2309	2786	2715
Regular Admits	527	610	590	607	522	634
Conditional Admits	1101	1395	1760	1702	2264	2081

While some in the academic community celebrate what is truly a "talent development" model, the lack of selectivity in admission is clearly related to a lack of success on the part of many students. Table 3 below shows recent trends in the first-year retention rates.

Beginning Freshmen Retention to the Second Year (AS/BS Degree-Seekers)

	Fall Semester of Entry					
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998*
All Students						
TOTAL	55.7%	55.2%	57.2%	55.8%	54.1%	55.1%
Directly Admitted to a School	66.2%	66.9%	66.7%	67.6%	66.2%	67.7%
Univ. Col - Regular Admits	59.8%	59.8%	64.9%	63.7%	59.3%	63.4%
Univ. Col - Conditional Admits	50.7%	49.3%	51.0%	50.4%	49.4%	51.1%
Full-Time						
TOTAL	61.4%	61.4%	62.0%	61.0%	59.2%	58.9%
Directly Admitted to a School	70.4%	70.3%	70.1%	69.5%	70.2%	70.5%
Univ. Col - Regular Admits	65.7%	65.4%	70.1%	67.4%	65.1%	66.6%
Univ. Col - Conditional Admits	54.5%	54.7%	54.1%	55.9%	53.5%	54.4%
Part-Time						
TOTAL	47.2%	43.4%	46.9%	43.7%	40.4%	44.6%
Directly Admitted to a School	47.1%	49.1%	51.9%	57.6%	45.2%	50.0%
Univ. Col - Regular Admits	48.2%	45.3%	47.1%	51.5%	37.3%	49.5%
Univ. Col - Conditional Admits	46.9%	42.2%	46.1%	40.6%	40.6%	43.5%

*Preliminary figures

Development of Learning Communities

Attention to undergraduate education has become a major campus-wide initiative during the last decade. Two distinct initiatives provided the foundation for the campus-wide first year learning communities now in place.

In 1994, a cadre of seven faculty from the School of Liberal Arts was engaged to develop new means of helping students make a successful transition to higher education. The faculty met intensively and examined works by John Gardner and others. They sought and shared resources, reviewed books, and discussed their findings, among other activities, to provide a framework for a new program, which would best apply practices from other institutions along with new elements adapted to the IUPUI environment.

In the spring of 1996, a team composed of three faculty members from the School of Science, a professional librarian, a computer science major, an instructional technologist, and an advisor began the task of developing a freshman experience course designed to help beginning science majors achieve a successful transition to their responsibilities as new scholars at the university. An institutional grant was provided to support the project, called *Windows on Science*, which focused on three main themes: the culture of science, the culture of the university, and the culture of the digital/knowledge age. The course was first presented by an instructional team during the Fall 1996 semester, and it has since been completely restructured in response to intensive assessment involving students and faculty.

Faculty members in each of the undergraduate schools assumed responsibility for creating learning community models to reflect the disciplines of their school and the expertise of their faculty. Prior to the development of school-based learning communities, few freshmen had the opportunity to work closely with the faculty from their schools during their first collegiate year. In many cases, entering students were not eligible to enroll in courses offered by their schools. Since the development of school-based learning communities, however, entering students are introduced to the academic expectations for their degrees and the career opportunities associated with their particular majors by the faculty in their schools. Students can also work closely in small groups with other freshmen who have declared similar majors, and, thereby establish connections with their school, their faculty, and their fellow students within their first semester. Ownership of learning community models by the individual academic schools has been critical to the success and growth of the IUPUI Learning Community Program. That policy has also helped to ensure that the learning communities have a strong academic base because faculty members in each school are invested in the development of the curriculum.

In the IUPUI model, a new first year course was central to the development of what would come to be known as learning communities. Other models (e.g., a schedule block or an interdisciplinary course) were not deemed appropriate for the needs of students at IUPUI. Many of IUPUI's learning communities consist of a first year seminar and a linked course. However, due to the scale of our effort, some learning communities entail only the first year course with its instructional team. A learning community booklet, based on a model from Temple University, was created to introduce students to the IUPUI Learning Community Program. Currently learning communities are offered by all undergraduate units.

Formation of University College

In 1997, after much discussion involving all of the schools on campus, IUPUI formed a new unit to assume and improve services to entering students. Named University College, the unit is charged with providing a common gateway to the academic programs available to entering students, including the Learning Communities. The College coordinates existing university resources and develops new initiatives to promote academic excellence and enhance student persistence. Located in a newly renovated building at the center of the campus, University

College provides a setting where faculty, staff, and students share in the responsibility for making IUPUI a supportive and challenging environment for learning. The new student orientation program, the improved academic advising initiative for entering students, the Learning Center (an entire floor of space designed for mentoring, tutoring, and supplemental instruction with the latest technology available to support learning), the new Honors Program, and the coordination of learning communities are all part of University College.

A distinguished faculty composed of individuals dedicated to the improvement of undergraduate education and representing all of the academic units at IUPUI provides academic leadership for University College.

Table 4

Learning Communities Sections and Enrollments, 1995-96 through 1999-00

	Number of Sections			Number of Participants		
Academic Year	Fall	Spring	Total	Fall	Spring	Total
1995-96	7	7	14	133	95	228
1996-97	25	18	43	309	164	473
1997-98	44	39	83	558	179	737
1998-99	73	43	116	823	713	1536
1999-00	108	-	108	2657	-	2657

When the IUPUI Learning Community Program was established in 1995, there was no general education program for undergraduates. Students followed different academic plans depending on their majors, and only one course was required of all undergraduates. Two schools, Liberal Arts and Science, have recently adopted a core curricular plan, but most of the undergraduate schools are not requiring it for their majors. One additional factor, which contributes to the complexity of the institution, is its financial structure, a responsibility-centered management model by which each school is responsible for generating its own income. The decentralization of IUPUI, therefore, was a major factor to be considered in the development of the new learning community program. The only way to ensure that every undergraduate school would support the program for its majors was to secure the participation of the faculty in each school in the development and operation of the learning communities.

In 1996, the First Year Studies Committee was established by University College to oversee the development of the IUPUI Learning Community Program, The Template.

Freshmen frequently change their majors. Therefore a sub-committee of faculty members and academic advisors from across the campus was established to tackle that problem.

This "Template for First Year Seminars" was introduced during the Fall 1998 semester. The template lists and explains the academic goals and objectives of the IUPUI Learning Community Program. Learning outcomes include the following:

1. Students will begin to develop an understanding of the major components of higher education.
2. Students will have the opportunity to experience a safe, supportive, and positive university learning environment, which includes the establishment of a network of staff, faculty, and other students.
3. Students will understand and begin to practice basic communication skills appropriate to the academic setting.
4. Students will begin to use critical thinking skills to solve problems in the context of the university environment.
5. Students will acquire a basic understanding of the fundamentals of scholarly inquiry, including the identification and use of academic library resources.

6. Students will understand and apply campus resources for information technology in support of their academic work and campus connections.
7. Students will begin to develop a knowledge of their own abilities, skills, and life demands so that they can develop these more effectively in pursuit of their academic goals.
8. Students will make full use of IUPUI resources and services that support their learning.

For each of the above learning outcomes, the template lists several specific ways that students will demonstrate their degree of mastery.

In order to foster student learning of the above outcomes, the template describes several pedagogical strategies modeled upon the intimate, interactive, and collegial atmosphere of a traditional upper division seminar. These pedagogical strategies include the following:

1. Instructional teams, comprised of a faculty member, librarian, academic advisor, and student mentor, who plan and present the seminar and support the students in their learning.
2. Controlled class size, limited to a maximum of 25 students.
3. Faculty shape the learning environment and the students' human and academic bond to the university. They model the scholarly enterprise and convey to students the expectations and commitment of academic learning in general and their respective disciplines in particular.

4. Collaborative and interactive learning foster opportunities that encourage students to develop peer relationships, find their academic voice in groups situations, and learn to see knowledge as a process of discovery in the company of others.
5. Connecting with the campus community, such as the library, Office of Advising, Office for Career Counseling, co-curricular activities, the Honors Program, the Student Learning Center, the University Writing Center, the department of the major, and Financial Aid, is critical for student academic success, and therefore a part of all first year seminars.
6. Every learning community syllabus introduces the goals of the course, specifies requirements and due dates, provides contact information for every member of the instructional team, and important dates on the academic calendar.
7. Every learning community contains mechanisms for assessing student learning, the class process, and the instructional team process. Formal assessment measures related to student satisfaction and learning outcomes are currently being developed by University College in collaboration with the other units offering learning communities.

The required curricular components include the culture and context of the university, critical thinking as fundamental to academic expectations in general and respective disciplines in particular, technology as a tool to enhance learning and build collaborative learning partnerships, the library as resource for learning, communication, both written and verbal, in small groups and large classes in order to enhance learning and share that learning with others, the wealth of resources to support learning at IUPUI, and the role of advising in their academic planning.

These disparate curricular components have at their center the campus-wide Principles of Undergraduate Learning, a set of six aspects of learning that undergird and permeate the undergraduate learning experience of all students at IUPUI.

All the undergraduate schools were asked to ensure that their learning community models follow the goals and objectives stated in the Template. The pedagogical practices utilized for the implementation of the Template goals and objectives, however, are left to the discretion of the faculty in each of the undergraduate schools. In addition, faculty members are encouraged to continue to include school-specific curriculum in each of their sections, as long as the expectations of the Template are also met.

The First Year Studies Template ensures academic consistency across the campus for the IUPUI Learning Community Program. Students are exposed to the same general skills and required to accomplish the same basic academic tasks regardless of the learning community they select. Students who change majors, therefore, do not place themselves in academic jeopardy. The use of the Template across the Learning Community Program has been advantageous for an additional reason: faculty members from a variety of disciplines introduce freshmen to the same academic skills, and they can come together to share pedagogical approaches to teaching those skills. The IUPUI Learning Community Program has, therefore, provided a reason and a forum for discussion on teaching freshmen.

Instructional Teams

One of the major components of the IUPUI Learning Community Template is the expectation that all sections will be taught by an instructional team. Instructional teams combine the expertise of a variety of members of the academic community and focus that expertise toward first-year students and their successful transition to higher education. At IUPUI, the instructional team approach has translated into a model in which faculty members, academic advisors, librarians, and student mentors all work collaboratively to construct first-year experience courses that promote academic achievement and a successful transition to the culture of an academic institution.

Each member of an instructional team provides a unique set of qualifications to the first-year learning community. The **faculty member**, authorized by the institution to provide structured learning experiences, serves as team leader and calls the team together. It is the faculty member's authority that provides a framework upon which the other team members may build. It is the faculty member's disciplinary expertise that provides the context for other team members' contributions. Ideally, resident faculty would be part of all instructional teams. Given IUPUI's heavy reliance on part-time faculty it is not possible to do this while providing a learning community experience for all entering students. Part-time faculty selected to participate are given support and mentoring from resident faculty and advisors in the sponsoring academic unit.

The **academic advisor** is uniquely qualified to translate the academic rules and procedures of the institution to students. Faculty members are not necessarily conversant with "the system" and how it functions. Advisors can promote student success by making that system more comprehensible and by providing counsel in exploring educational options. At IUPUI, advisors have taken on an additional role by developing and facilitating learning experiences that focus on necessary academic skills, such as note taking and time management.

The **librarian** is a strong ally to the faculty. Librarians can translate the workings of an academic library, but can also go beyond an introduction to library services to address notions such as rules of evidence within an academic setting, mechanisms for reporting scholarly communication, and the importance of source attribution and citation. Librarians can help the institution establish a baseline of information skills for first-year students. Working as collaborative partners with faculty, librarians can help expand the range of teaching and learning materials as new information technologies provide new opportunities to accommodate a wider range of learning styles.

The **student mentor** helps provide an environment in which students are psychologically comfortable. Without suffering from the adversarial connotations of an ombudsman, the student mentor can act as a buffer between students and faculty when there are issues that either would be uncomfortable addressing with the other. The student mentor also serves as an exemplar—a physical embodiment of student success that a first-year student can use as a model for his or her own success.

The instructional team approach offers numerous rewards to those who serve on the teams and to the institution as a whole. In an instructional team environment, the institution explicitly demonstrates its commitment to the university's teaching mission. Since instructional team members are collaborative partners, a broad spectrum of academic personnel become personally committed to the teaching mission and to the success of enterprises affecting others. Camaraderie develops among instructional team members, which affects how business is conducted throughout the institution. Service gaps begin to be perceived as a cause for communal concern, rather than as an individual's isolated problem. Perhaps most importantly, students begin to perceive that they are valued as individuals. Instructional team members have spoken of their experience as "transformational." Insights and interactions on instructional teams have led to new ways of thinking about students, colleagues, and the enterprises of teaching and learning.

Network and Colloquium Create Community

Each May University College and the First Year Studies Committee sponsor a Learning Community Colloquium for all members of instructional teams across the campus. The all-day program is dedicated to sharing ideas and to introducing new instructional team members to the Learning Community Program. Workshops are provided on various topics associated with the learning community curriculum including incorporating technology, introducing service learning, planning for library projects, and preparing for registration. Instructional team members are also invited to make presentations on aspects of their learning community model that have been particularly successful or creative.

The May Learning Community Colloquium sessions provide a forum for sharing ideas and distributing information across IUPUI's large Learning Community Program. Regular communications between the personnel who coordinate the Program in University College and the liaisons in each of the schools is handled through the IUPUI Learning Community Network. The Network is primarily a listserv that connects key personnel in the Learning Community Program with school liaisons for transmitting important information quickly to the faculty members in the schools and to all instructional team members. At least once a semester, the members of the Network also meet to discuss issues associated with the operation and management of the program. In addition, University College maintains and distributes contact sheets, which list the names, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers of all instructional team members.

Summary

Within the array of IUPUI learning community sections, there are two basic models: those developed by the academic schools for their majors and those offered through University College, primarily intended for students who are undecided about their major or who fail to meet the academic criteria required by the school-sponsored sections. Each academic school has developed its own learning community model based on the common core but uniquely structured to serve the needs of entering students in that school. The school-based models place an emphasis on introducing the students to the various disciplines represented in the school, the curricular components and academic expectations for majors, and the career opportunities available to students with degrees from that school. Typically, school-based models are restricted to students who have declared a major in the sponsoring school and who have met established academic requirements for enrollment in the learning community course. Some schools also accept students who are considering declaring a major in the school but are unsure of their academic plans.

Since schools are encouraged to develop learning community models that reflect the culture and academic benefits unique to that school, the faculty have easily assumed ownership of the school-sponsored learning community models. The School of Business, for example, has developed a service learning component for the learning community. Each student participates in a Junior Achievement project in collaboration with other students in the class.

University College sponsors a variety of learning community sections for students who have not determined their majors. Those learning community sections are taught by faculty from a wide range of disciplines. Many of the learning community sections are linked, pairing a discipline-based general education course with a one-credit first year seminar taught by the same professor. For example, an English professor may lead an instructional team in teaching a first year seminar course that is linked to his or her Elementary Composition I course. The twenty-five students who are enrolled in the seminar are also enrolled in the English course. The skills taught in the seminar are the same skills required for success in the first-year introductory course including the skills of critical thinking, effective use of the library, and ability to use the computer network.

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Reference

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Learning Communities in a Professional School: Implementing Learning Communities in the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University

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Abstract: Learning communities represent an important concept in higher education. Yet, in practice, key philosophical values and design attributes of learning communities pose special problems for faculty and administrators in professional schools. The results of a case study conducted in the Kelley School of Business are reviewed and analyzed. The study examines problems encountered when the School attempts to incorporate learning communities into its curriculum. Recommendations are offered that will allow learning communities to be effectively assimilated into the culture of professional schools and the professional curriculum.

In higher education, the concept of the learning community offers great promise for students and faculty. At its core, a learning community is both a pedagogical tool and a curricular device designed to build connections among students, faculty and staff who seek to attain shared goals and learning outcomes. It includes a structure that fosters collaboration and co-curricular learning (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith, 1990). In their seminal work, Learning Communities: Creating Connections among Students, Faculty, and Disciplines, Gabelnick, et al. define a learning community as a deliberate curricular structure which is intended to "[p]urposely restructure the curriculum to link together courses or course work so that students find greater coherence in what they are learning as well as increased intellectual interaction with faculty and fellow students" (p.5).

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Learning communities can assist an instructor to reach a variety of outcomes. Two aspects of learning communities particularly salient in this analysis are collaboration and co-curricular learning. Collaboration is an important goal of a learning community. At many universities, the academic curriculum has fragmented along disciplinary lines. A learning community provides students and faculty with a forum to encourage collaboration and to re-integrate the curriculum. Through participation in a learning community, faculty with different professional backgrounds collaborate to establish an interdisciplinary curriculum. Training and development also occur when faculty engage in the intellectual process of establishing course objectives or creating curricular materials that encompass a wider theoretical framework. In addition, the process of developing a multidisciplinary framework allows faculty to widen the scope of their "disciplinary gaze" (Bourdieu, 1990). As a result, collaboration allows faculty to adjust their understanding of their own subject and how others learn about it.

Another important aspect of learning communities is that faculty and academic staff must collaborate to be effective. Many key contributors to university life have been separated from academic life at a great cost to student development. In corporate life, this practice is described as building "functional silos" in which bureaucracies create departments whose members fail to tie their efforts together in order to accomplish organizational goals (e.g., Abbott, 1981, 1988). Innovation and learning is severely hindered as a result. While organizations can still be very effective when functional areas operate independently as "islands of excellence," performance declines over time unless mechanisms are built to bridge these isolated islands and to increase communication within a firm.

Learning communities also require faculty and staff to develop an important role for co-curricular learning in the undergraduate curriculum. Co-curricular learning is defined as the social and cultural learning that occurs as well as the academic content of a course. Learning communities enable students to address a wider array of issues in their personal development than are typically considered in an academic course. Student development lies at the center of a learning community. By setting this as a course objective, faculty ensure that students pursue their personal development within a structured learning environment. The learning community represents one of the finest examples of how to join student learning in the broadest sense to the narrower goal of "academic learning."

The twin goals of collaboration and co-curricular learning entwine to enhance the likelihood that each goal can be attained. For example, co-curricular learning objectives require faculty to seek collaboration with other staff and professionals. It is rare, indeed, for a single instructor to identify the many facets that should be considered when designing an academic course. Even rarer is it to find one instructor who can successfully teach a course that contains diverse objectives covering a wide range of academic and "non-academic" topics.

Different Types of Learning Communities

Since definitions of learning communities are broad, it is reasonable that many potential objectives have been formulated for learning communities, which include linked courses and first year learning communities. In a linked format, a learning community is tied to another specific course. Typically, students enroll in both courses during the same academic period. It is assumed that there is a logical relationship between the two courses. As a result, faculty teach each course independently, but there is a higher degree of coordination and collaboration between instructors than is achieved in the general curriculum. Often, the learning community depends upon its paired course, especially when the linked course is an introductory course in a major or is a general education course.

The instructor in the learning community will design it to weave its goals with those of the linked course into a single, unified course outline. A primary strength of the linked course concept is that pairing courses provides students with a learning context that is engaging and compelling, and each instructor can achieve a high degree of curricular integration. However, a potential weakness is that the links between courses could become tenuous and integration might not yield meaningful learning outcomes.

Student development is at the center of the first year learning community. Typically, first year learning communities address issues associated with students in transition to college: academic skill development, counseling, transitional skill development, and, recently, student retention (e.g., Chaffee, 1992; Higbee and Dwinell, 1999). Co-curricular learning objectives are also emphasized. However, some serious issues cause first year learning communities to suffer from the most ambiguous and ill-defined mission of all the types of learning communities.

Learning Communities and Business Education

Reports on the impact of learning communities on student outcomes show impressive results in many areas. As a result, faculty and staff who attempt to use learning communities attain a wide variety of outcomes. Faced with the great diversity of objectives, it is often difficult for instructors to identify how appropriate a particular type of learning community is in a specific educational setting. Few have asked if learning communities are appropriate for professional school use. In many universities, a large percentage of undergraduates intend to enroll in a professional school. Historically, learning communities have been used most extensively in Liberal Arts or Education curricula, with the assumption that learning communities can be used as effectively in the professional schools.

However, professional education in areas such as business or nursing contains objectives that stand in sharp contrast to many of the goals and objectives of learning communities. Professional schools design courses of study that conform to the requirements of their professional certification associations (Coe, 1970; Gerson, 1983). Learning communities often are not required or even recommended by a Professional Association or a Certification Board. Since the learning community is not required for certification, then it must be treated as an elective offering for the undergraduate curriculum. Incorporating a learning community into the prescribed curriculum thus proves difficult to accomplish since its elective credits typically must be added to the total credits required for graduation.

Also, most professional schools do not admit students directly into their program. Instead, students are typically admitted into a professional school once they have completed a prescribed course of study in the first two years. This poses a dilemma for educators: either a professional school can delay instruction on the learning community until the sophomore or junior year, or it can enroll first year students into its courses. Schools generally decide not to delay instruction, but rather offer a first year community course. As a result, the use of learning communities requires professional schools to educate students who are only beginning their undergraduate studies. Thus, many goals of learning communities, especially co-curricular objectives, are unfamiliar to the faculty and staff.

A related problem is that the ethos of professional schools is inimical, if not hostile, to many developmental goals and co-curricular objectives associated with learning communities. Specifically, the culture of professional education is to establish criteria designed to admit only a small percentage of students seeking admission into their school (e.g., Bledstein, 1976; Hughes, 1963). Professional schools establish entrance standards, course requirements, GPA requirements, and "gatekeeper" courses to develop a fair admissions process. Under these conditions, when the entire thrust of the early years of the educational process is to ensure that only the best applicants are accepted into the school, student development is simply not an integral component of the underlying culture. The absence of a supportive culture for developing student skills and co-curricular learning hampers the design and teaching of first year learning communities.

Faculty in professional schools reinforce these cultural values. A core value of professional education is that students must hurdle performance standards to receive a degree. Emphasis on assessment and evaluation infuses every aspect of the professional curriculum. Professional associations continuously involve their membership in setting professional standards, and academic faculty are at the forefront of these efforts. In addition, the same faculty have met and surpassed these criteria in their process of becoming a member in good standing in the profession. In short, faculty have been thoroughly socialized into the profession (e.g., Bartles, 1962; Haskell, 1984; Brumberg and Tomes, 1982). A key professional duty is to ensure that students are well trained and contribute to the continuing development and excellence of the profession.

In this culture, a learning community course meets with significant resistance. Professional schools often have little contact with students early in their academic careers. Faculty values support strict requirements for entry by students into the profession, and design undergraduate curriculum without the developmental needs of freshmen or even sophomore students in mind.

Business schools are typical of professional schools. The business program is one of the most popular academic majors among undergraduate students, frequently containing a large number of undergraduates in many universities and colleges. Over the years, Schools of Business have developed a reputation for being particularly resistant to many curricular trends that have spread throughout undergraduate education.

A major criticism of contemporary business education centers on its failure to attain educational breadth with regard to the social, political and cultural environment in which business schools operate (e.g., Sedlak and Wiliamson, 1983; Porter and McKibbin, 1988). This criticism is particularly trenchant for the undergraduate curriculum. Schools of Business narrow the concept of education for their students at a time when developmental and co-curricular objectives are receiving increasing attention. In business circles, this concern is often expressed in terms of a failure to teach business students about corporate responsibility and business ethics (e.g., Zlotkowski, 1996). However, the problem of the narrowness of the business undergraduate curriculum extends in a few directions. First, as others have observed (e.g., Rama, 1998), business schools tend to delegate curricular responsibility to other academic units such as general education requirements in speech, writing and communication. Second, too many schools are taking too few steps to embrace a curriculum that supports student development. For example, recently The National Association for Developmental Education (NADE) has established a working definition for "developmental education" which includes the following elements: a holistic focus on cognitive and affective development of students, acknowledges a spectrum of learning styles and needs, and promotes an interdisciplinary range of approaches and student services (Lundell and Collins, 1999). If the current performance of schools is analyzed objectively, the goals of developmental education are not easily incorporated into the undergraduate curriculum in business.

In this study, preliminary results of a case study of a large-scale attempt to implement learning communities in a School of Business are reported. After reviewing the context for implementing the learning communities, the barriers and potential pitfalls faced in the School will be discussed. Finally, a few lessons learned will be offered.

Context of the Study

The Kelley School of Business (KSB) at Indiana University offers a traditional undergraduate program in business education. While some students are directly admitted into the School, the majority are admitted during their sophomore or junior years. Major areas of study include accounting, finance, marketing, management, and information systems. The Kelley School operates in a large, state-funded research institution. As a result, tenure-track faculty must balance the demands of teaching and research. Tenure-track faculty tend to be assigned predominantly to graduate teaching, while a significantly greater percentage of undergraduate teaching is performed by full-time and part-time non-tenure track instructors, as well as by a few doctoral students.

In recent years, the School has launched a wide variety of initiatives intended to improve the quality of undergraduate teaching. The program is not a series of separate, isolated courses taught in large lecture halls by harried doctoral students, junior faculty or an occasional disinterested senior faculty. However, while KSB is devoted to excellent undergraduate teaching, it is also true that undergraduate teaching is not the pre-eminent mission objective in the School.

The KSB is structured in a relatively unusual manner, operating undergraduate and graduate programs on two campuses, Indiana University Bloomington and Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). There is a single faculty at the School, one tenure process, and one Tenure and Promotion Committee. Faculty are assigned to teach on either campus. However, there are few crossover assignments. Instead, over time, the School has developed a Bloomington program and an Indianapolis program. The curriculum is largely the same on both campuses. The School issues a Baccalaureate degree and a Masters of Business Administration degree. The entire faculty vote to award the degree to students on both campuses. The diplomas for both undergraduate and graduate degrees contain wording to designate the campus on which the degree was obtained. Otherwise, there is no distinction made within the School concerning where a student pursued and ultimately received his or her degree.

The student populations differ in several ways on the Bloomington and IUPUI campuses. For example, students at Bloomington more closely fit the definition of a full-time student, enroll in more courses in the Fall and Spring semesters, and tend to work fewer hours per year at a job while attending school. Bloomington students also tend to be younger, to have less experience, to be better prepared for their first year of study, and have a higher graduation rate than students at IUPUI.

While the University has explicitly acknowledged differences in the mission of the two campuses and each campus pursues its own mission, it is often difficult to identify differences in the mission for the two campuses, the official policies and procedures, or even the published literature. As is so often the case, the differences can be found on the margins and they affect a relatively small percentage of actions taken on either campus. The major impact lies in the differences in perception held by faculty and students regarding the differences between the two campuses. In 1998, for example, the academic and career profiles of students who enrolled in the MBA programs on the two campuses were remarkably similar. When this study was initiated, the biggest difference in the student populations was the issue of academic preparedness and retention at the core of the undergraduate program.

At IUPUI, steps have been taken to increase the rate at which students progress through the University and receive their baccalaureate degree. Perhaps one of the most ambitious steps taken has been the creation of University College, the first academic home of a majority of students admitted into the University. It has established an integrated, systematic program that includes extensive counseling, mentoring, and assessment conducted by staff at University College. In addition, University College has established a first-year faculty who are comprised of tenure-track faculty who govern the operations of University College, as well as courses intended to help under-prepared students. University College faculty are also asked to teach learning communities and first year seminars. The first year seminar is designed to provide students with development skills and, when possible, to link learning communities to introductory courses required in specific disciplines. University College established a "First Year Seminar Template" that includes eight key learning outcomes, which are disseminated widely throughout the University to guide instructors on the goals and objectives deemed critical for success (see Williams, this volume). Key components of the First Year Seminar include instructional teams, smaller class sizes, resident teaching faculty, collaborative and action learning strategies, common syllabus based on the template, and co-curricular connections to support services throughout the University. An instructional team is responsible for each learning community. Each team includes a faculty member, a librarian, an academic advisor and a student mentor. The composition of the instructional team reflects the objectives of the Template.

Learning Communities in the Kelley School of Business at IUPUI

Against this backdrop, the Kelley School of Business initiated a project to incorporate learning communities into its undergraduate program. The project began during Spring, 1998 and continues today. The project began when a single Associate Professor in the School volunteered to teach the Introduction to Business course (X100). The School's Undergraduate Policy Committee had voted to require the X100 course for every student who sought admission into the School. In conjunction with this action, the Committee urged the School's administration to assign a tenured faculty member to teach the course. This recommendation stood in stark contrast with the School's prevailing strategy of assigning part-time faculty and full-time instructors to teach the lowest level courses in the undergraduate curriculum. When the instructor began to develop the X100 course, a member of University College contacted the faculty member and suggested that the School of Business could develop learning community courses, and that the learning community courses could be linked to the Introduction to Business course. The faculty member agreed and the inaugural learning community course was offered during the Spring, 1998. It incorporated the key principles included in the Template, and was linked to the X100 course.

As a pilot study, the results were promising for the learning community and its linked companion course, X100. Students mastered most learning outcomes in the Template, including effective oral and written communication skills, how to use computer software to make presentation materials to better deliver their message, how to access computer resources at IUPUI and how to solve educational problems in general, and about issues related to each element in the learning community Template. Assessment data suggested that both students and the instructor reacted very favorably to their experience in the learning community.

A few drawbacks emerged, however. Most importantly, developing an instructional team and then coordinating the team's efforts proved to be a very difficult task. In fact, several problems were never satisfactorily resolved. The instructor had not received adequate preparation for the responsibilities associated with being the leader of an instructional team, and the instructional team members did not possess prior experience in business education. Unfortunately, neither the faculty nor the team members anticipated the extensive development required to become an effective instructional team. As a result, the instructional team did not build assignments and exercises into the course syllabus intended to foster learning of template objectives. The instructor and staff never became a cohesive teaching unit. Instead, the instructor assumed a traditional role as the leader of in-class teaching. The staff were relegated to a secondary role and acted more like "invited guests" than a central component of an instructional team.

Based on the data and experience obtained from faculty, staff, and students, the Undergraduate Policy committee urged the faculty leader to expand the learning community pilot into a full-blown system for the Kelley School of Business for the Fall Semester, 1998.

Problems Emerge When the Kelley School of Business Attempts to Implement Learning Communities throughout the Undergraduate Program

The School's administration decided to expand the learning community project to cover all first year students who intended to apply for admission into the Kelley School of Business. In the Fall, 1998 semester the School offered more than twenty-five learning community courses and linked each to the X100 course.

The first problem encountered was deciding who would teach learning communities, given that a learning community is designed to be a one credit hour course. As a practical matter, instructors would have to "fit" teaching a learning community into their semester teaching schedule. At KSB, one three-credit course represents a standard course taught for a sixteen-week semester. Depending on their teaching contract, an instructor would be required to teach one to three courses per semester, with the standard teaching load equaling two courses, or six credit hours, per semester. If an instructor taught a single learning community, then it would count as a single credit hour of teaching. The School could respond to an extra credit generated by an instructor in a variety of ways. An instructor could receive extra compensation, but one credit of extra teaching equals three percent of a tenure-track faculty's salary based on a ten-month contract and did not prove to be an incentive. Second, an instructor could "bank" the credit to be used in the future to lessen a teaching load in a semester. Most faculty would have to bank three credits in order to generate enough credits to effect a typical teaching assignment. Finally, an instructor could teach three learning communities in a semester and have the three courses substitute for a single regular course.

This outlines a critical problem confronting KSB. If paid to faculty as extra compensation for "overload instruction," one credit equals three percent of one-tenth of base salary when computed on a ten-month basis. For many faculty, the value of compensation would not be sufficient to attract them to teach learning communities. The two remaining options also suffered, upon greater scrutiny. Few faculty believed that teaching three learning community courses in a single semester was a teaching load equivalent to teaching a single three credit course. Put simply, faculty believed that teaching a learning community represented a significantly greater investment in time and effort than teaching a standard course. Of course, they had little or no experience in teaching one credit courses in any other setting. So, in fact, faculty evaluated the effort required to teach in a Learning Community in terms of whether teaching three learning communities were roughly equivalent to teaching a single three credit course. The answer was a resounding "No!" Teaching a learning community represented a much greater effort than "regular" teaching. As a result, faculty believed that their participation in the learning community project would reflect "good citizenship behavior" on behalf of the faculty towards the School. However, it is fair to state that in general, the faculty did not believe that the compensation and teaching arrangement represented an attractive package.

Another problem concerned the potential effect of learning communities on the undergraduate curriculum and its administration. Many faculty believed that a professional school's curriculum should train students for entry into the profession. In this view, there are already too many "distractions" for students included in the current curriculum. By distractions, faculty meant that general education requirements already represented more than fifty percent of a student's education. As a result, they complained that a learning community course represented one credit hour less that would be available for the School of Business to use to teach business topics. In addition, the extra credit hour tied to X100 reduced flexibility for students. If students were required to enroll in a learning community, they could only enroll in five three credit courses in a semester, or a total of fifteen credit hours. As a result, faculty complained that the Undergraduate Policy Committee's decision to require the learning community and to link the X100 course reduced the degree of discretion enjoyed by students in the undergraduate curriculum.

The implications of the objectives of learning communities for pedagogy and teaching philosophy were also problematic. Faculty did not generally endorse the goal of increasing the retention rate of students because they believed that increased retention would not necessarily improve the quality of the undergraduate program at KSB. As one faculty member observed, "The type of student who requires the support offered by a learning community will *not* be likely to actually be admitted into the School of Business." As with many other Schools of Business, especially at large state universities, KSB has enjoyed very high enrollments in its undergraduate program. KSB admits students upon completion of their sophomore year of study. For the last few years, KSB has rejected a significant percentage of first- and second-year students who applied for admission into the School. In addition, the School required students to enroll in six business courses prior to applying for admission. In general, these courses already enjoyed high enrollment. Under this scenario, faculty were not attracted by the prospect of increasing the pool of students who would not ultimately be admitted into the undergraduate program. This should not be viewed as necessarily elitist or cold hearted. In fact, some faculty expressed the idea that it would be better for students if they were not encouraged to believe they might be admitted into the School of Business since it most likely would not occur. Under these conditions, a realistic preview of what was likely to occur was assumed to be a better outcome for students.

Finally, faculty distinguished between the retention objectives and the developmental and co-curricular objectives of learning communities. They stressed their professional goals and objectives when teaching their courses to undergraduate students; most professors did not include developmental and co-curricular goals in their course syllabus. Instead, if allowed to teach an extra class period, it is safe to assume that most faculty in the School would choose an additional topic in their discipline rather than add either a developmental goal or co-curricular objective. Even if inclined to address these goals, faculty felt that they were not adequately trained to engage their students in appropriate learning activities.

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that faculty were less than enthusiastic about learning communities and were tepid, if not openly hostile, towards the idea of expanding the scale and scope of the Learning Community program in the Kelley School of Business. In fact, when faculty were afforded the opportunity to volunteer to participate in the learning communities project, the response was not positive.

As the summer session began, a few key facts emerged. First, the scale of the learning community program needed to expand quickly. When it expanded, the learning communities would be linked to the Introduction to Business X100 course. The goals of the learning community would be to increase retention among students and to develop the entire student, academically and non-academically. Instructors would be required to adopt the curricular outline and pedagogical philosophy of the Template. KSB would develop an administrative structure and curricular plan to allow the School to operate more than twenty learning communities in Fall

Semester, which was developed despite faculty objections and in the face of the curricular demands.

KSB Implements a Full-Fledged Learning Community Program in the Fall Semester

The Undergraduate Policy Committee decided to implement a full-scale Learning Community Program in the Fall Semester. The School moved forward on its learning community plan whether or not the faculty, a key stakeholder, supported the program. Traditionally, when faced with faculty resistance to a plan, KSB would respond by taking steps designed to increase faculty involvement and support of the proposal and would not move forward in the face of resistance. In this instance, the School encouraged key faculty and administrators to continue to develop learning communities while assuming that tenure-track faculty would not contribute soon to the project.

KSB reassigned four instructors to teach learning communities for the fall semester. These were full-time instructors who were not on a tenure track but who were assigned a full teaching load, usually greater than a tenure-track faculty. Each instructor was assigned to teach three to five learning communities. The tenured faculty member who taught the X100 course was asked to act as a Project Coordinator in order to link learning communities to the course.

The new plan was outlined in July, approximately four weeks prior to the start of the fall semester. As a first step, it was suggested that the Coordinator seek a meeting with the instructors to discuss their new assignment and devise strategies for the new semester. The Coordinator welcomed the idea, and in July, the instructors and the Coordinator met on campus for two hours on a Friday afternoon. During the first hour of the meeting, the Coordinator tried to outline the many elements of the plan: the idea of a learning community, the Template, key objectives and philosophy, the linkage to the X100 course, the retention and co-curricular goals, and the Coordinator's role. There was some time available for a general discussion, and instructors expressed a belief that learning communities were founded on an ill-conceived philosophy. When the meeting ended, the participants agreed to meet again to discuss the Fall Semester rollout. Unfortunately, the Coordinator soon realized that this would not be a task easily accomplished. Due to the heavy work responsibilities and despite the best efforts of everyone involved, the instructors met with the Coordinator only one more time, the day before the beginning of the Fall semester.

As the semester unfolded, instructors never received formal training and development, and they wished to expand the role of the Coordinator to assist them in the curricular design of learning communities. Based on this information, the Coordinator took a series of steps designed to establish a framework for success when the learning communities were taught in the Fall semester. First, the Coordinator concluded that there was too much uncertainty among the instructors over the goals, objectives and pedagogy of teaching in learning communities. The Coordinator preferred to allow instructors to develop their own skills, abilities, and style when teaching a learning community. However, there was neither the time nor the resources available to pursue this objective. As a result, the Coordinator decided to make several "mid-course" corrections intended to lessen the effects of the decisions made by the School during the initial launch.

The first step taken was to standardize the curriculum. A common course syllabus was developed which contained objectives, assignments and required readings. Standardization reduced the need for instructors to spend too much time in trying to understand how to outline the basic direction of a learning community. A second step was to develop a common textbook for the learning community, a custom book of readings, exercises, and assignments. Finally, perhaps the most important decision concerned the pedagogy to be adopted in learning communities. The Coordinator adopted a pedagogical device intended to address the goals of the template and the emphasis on active learning. In most undergraduate courses, instructors would typically seek assignments that would force students to actively address learning goals and outcomes. However, instructors faced special problems when incorporating active learning exercises into a learning community. The goals and objectives were unfamiliar for the instructors and there was insufficient time available for them to identify and build assignments and exercises into the learning community syllabus; these had to also contribute to the goals and objectives in the template. Finally, in the absence of a well-developed history in teaching learning communities, there was an obvious need to ensure a high level of quality and standardization across different learning communities.

After a brief search, the Coordinator selected a pedagogical device intended to overcome these problems and to ensure that, in some degree, the goals and objectives of the learning communities were met. An alliance was established with the local Junior Achievement, Incorporated (JA), incorporating one of its recognized programs—using JA volunteers to teach a business and economic course to elementary age children in the learning community. The JA program seemed to be well suited for the KSB and its learning communities; it addressed business and economic issues that coincided with KSB's values. When a student enrolled in a learning community he or she was placed in a student team. Each student team could participate in a JA program at an elementary school. Junior Achievement, Inc. became a highly valued partner coordinating much of the effort each semester: identifying schools and teachers, supplying teaching materials, providing contact information for teams to communicate with each teacher, and so on.

The JA activity provided KSB with an excellent opportunity to satisfy goals and objectives in the learning community template. By participating in the JA project, students learned how to work effectively in teams, developed written and oral communication skills, and practiced time management and project management skills. In addition, while these objectives are central to the learning community template, many of the skills students learn while working in a JA team are also highly valued in KSB. Communication, teamwork, project management, leadership, and time management are very important skills for any student enrolled in the undergraduate program in business and in a business career in general. Finally, the JA project was a good vehicle for active learning. Students formulated and executed a plan of their design in a highly interactive setting, in which the final outcome was uncertain, the specific direction was unknown, and in which students would be asked to learn and adjust their plan through the duration of the project. As a result, the JA project occupied a central pedagogical position within the KSB Learning Community Program. After discussing the JA project with the instructors, it was decided that nearly 40% of the course would be allocated to the JA project. As a result, many supplemental educational outcomes would be introduced to students while they participated in their JA project. The JA project was soon incorporated and became a key component of the learning community course.

Table One

Attributes of Learning Communities at the Kelley School of Business

1.	Type of Learning Community	First Year Seminar, Linked to Introductory Course in Business.
2.	Objectives	Attain Goals included in the Learning Community Template; Improve Developmental Skills and Co-Curricular Learning; and Increase Student Retention.
3.	Course Design	One Credit Course, Sixteen Week Semester, One Hour of Scheduled Class Time Per Week.
4.	Pedagogy	Instruction Team: Lead Faculty Instruction, Librarian, Student Advisor, and Student Mentor.
5.	Key Project	Junior Achievement Team Teaching Project.

Results from the First Year of the Learning Community Project at KSB

Conclusions drawn from a single year must be interpreted cautiously since there are too many variables involved in each semester to allow for reliable and valid interpretation. While the Learning Community Program is still a work-in-progress at KSB, there are a few results and observations that should be noted. First, retention rates did increase for students enrolled in KSB's learning communities. Increasing student retention is a key objective in many learning communities and it was an important objective at KSB. Second, students evaluated their learning experience positively. In general, students evaluated their experience in the learning community as average for a KSB course. Third, in nearly every learning community course, students and instructors reported that the highlight of the course was the JA project. Finally, student evaluations also suggested that there was great variability in course assessment across learning communities.

In addition, a few administrative issues were not solved during the first year. First, relying on a few instructors to teach every learning community had both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, the instructors were willing to teach learning communities and, overall, each instructor performed their assignment professionally. On the negative side, turnover among the instructors after the first year was high. Only two instructors from the initial group were willing to teach in the second year of the learning community project. In addition, the tenure-track faculty did not warm to the program during the year. Training and development for instructors remained an obvious and glaring need in the School. A few questions continued unanswered: What should be the content of a training program? Who should deliver course training to instructors (or in the future, faculty)? How should a training program be administered (e.g., required attendance, extra compensation, and so on)? Another issue was that many of the goals and objectives of the learning community Template still seemed unfamiliar, if not alien, to the staff and faculty at the School. Fourth, an "Instructional Team" concept still posed a great barrier to adoption and widespread acceptance within the School. Coordination requires time and face-to-face interaction. The Instructional Team concept placed great burdens on instructors, yet few instructors identified many tangible benefits derived from forming and leading an instructional team for their learning community. Finally, the linkage between the X100 course and the learning communities clearly needed further refinement and development.

Table Two
Selected Results for the First Year of Full-Scale Operation

1. Students evaluated the course positively. On average, student evaluations of Learning Community courses were average to slightly above average when compared to evaluations for other first and second year Business courses.
2. Instructors evaluated their teaching experience as a moderately positive one.
3. Full time, tenure-track faculty did not embrace program for several reasons.
4. A Service Learning project, a project performed in alliance with Junior Achievement, Inc., was very well received by faculty, students and participants.
5. When operations increased in scale and scope, few administrative problems and errors were encountered.

Summary and Conclusion

On short notice, KSB encouraged a faculty member to implement a trial program for a learning community. During the 1998-1999 academic year, the School implemented a large scale learning community program in which every student who sought to be admitted into the Kelley School of Business was required to enroll in a learning community. To meet this requirement, five instructors were asked to teach a great number of learning communities in the Fall and Spring semesters. A JA project was selected to be a central activity in the learning community, which enabled instructors to link the learning community Template to an active-learning exercise. A faculty coordinator also linked learning communities to KSB's Introduction to Business X100 course.

Results of the first year, while preliminary, suggested that students and instructors evaluated positively their experience in the learning community. However, a few issues emerged during the administration of the program that must be addressed and resolved if the learning community project will grow at KSB. First, tenure-track faculty at the School raised a few troubling issues with the underlying philosophy of the learning communities implemented at KSB. The learning community was intended to be a First Year course designed to address developmental and co-curricular needs of students while also being linked to the Introduction to Business course. In general, tenure-track faculty did not support either objective, but instead were wary of them. They questioned whether these objectives were appropriate for a professional school. In addition, faculty strongly resisted the notion that they could lead students to learn materials and skills associated with these developmental and co-curricular objectives. During the entire academic year the School was not able to lessen the intensity of these criticisms or to increase faculty support of learning communities. KSB's inability to attract tenure-track faculty represented a critical failure that the School must solve in the future if learning communities are to become deeply integrated into the culture of the Undergraduate Program.

Neither tenure-track faculty nor full-time instructors demonstrated the slightest interest in linking activities in their learning community to the X100 course. Many diverse motives held by faculty and instructors combined to yield the views that the culture of the school does not support a collaborative teaching culture; no one allocated sufficient time for faculty or instructors to engage in a collaborative process; and faculty in both courses did not possess adequate teaching experience to develop linking activities or exercises between the two courses. In a similar vein, instructors didn't understand the potential pedagogical value of the "instructional team," nor did they allocate sufficient time to effectively coordinate and lead the efforts of the instructional team in the learning community.

Finally, the structure of the learning community teaching assignment remains a barrier to future success. Currently, the learning community courses are one-credit courses. The course meets for approximately one hour per week for sixteen weeks. KSB did not have a tradition of undergraduate courses offered other than in sixteen-week blocks for three credit hours. As a result, the structure of the learning community proved to be a significant impediment when recruiting faculty to teach a learning community. To newcomers, three learning communities in one semester appeared to be a significantly more demanding teaching assignment than to teach a single three-credit course. Yet, teaching only one or two learning communities in a semester did not offer greater utility to an instructor. Even if someone taught one or two extra learning communities and "banked" the extra credits, it would still take several semesters to save enough credits to affect a teaching schedule. In addition, the faculty were concerned that the Instructional Team component of the learning community would significantly increase the amount of time required to teach the course. Added coordination not only takes more time, but faculty must also develop skills for effective coordination. An obvious question that was raised in a variety of settings was whether the added time, effort and change required of faculty to participate in a learning community yielded sufficient learning outcomes to warrant the investment. One year into the learning community experiment at the Kelley School of Business, it was still unclear whether the experiment warranted the effort.

Learning communities represent an intriguing and important pedagogical device. The goals and objectives of the learning communities are important and central to the mission of many universities and colleges. To achieve these goals, universities must identify strategies to establish learning communities in all schools, including the professional schools. The Kelley School of Business represents a case study of an attempt to implement learning communities in a professional school. The current state of the learning community project at KSB suggests that it is still a "work-in-progress." One year into the project, the School and its faculty are still exploring, testing, and learning about learning communities. To teach a community, to ensure that students develop their skills, and to establish an environment in which students progress and even flourish while enrolled in the University, represent important steps to be mastered and which the School is still attempting to learn. While the journey will prove difficult, the objectives are worthwhile.

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Use of Instructional Teams in First-Year Seminars

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Abstract: The instructional team concept is predicated on the notion that student success and achievement require expertise from faculty, but also from other key players in the higher education setting. Instructional teams for the University College First-Year Seminar include a librarian, an academic advisor, and a student mentor who work with a faculty member who functions as the team leader. The dynamics of instructional activity appear to fall into four phases—team formation, course development and design, implementation, and assessment. This article describes the experience of Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis with instructional teams in terms of these four phases.

According to *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* (Senge et al, 1994), the word "team" has always meant "pulling together" and the concept of team has long referred to "a group of people acting together" (p. 354). To achieve teamwork, Senge and others have discussed the importance of developing an understanding of and alignment with the other members of the team. Developing the capacity to function as a whole requires that team members become aligned so that their individual energies harmonize toward a common direction. According to Senge (1990), when team alignment is achieved, members have a shared vision, know how to complement each other's efforts, and synergy develops. Senge views the team's shared vision as an extension of individual visions rather than requiring team members to sacrifice their personal interests.

The notion of teaming together professionals with different areas of expertise in a common endeavor has a long history in any number of enterprises. The field of education has employed a wide variety of collaborative structures including site-based decision-making teams, ad hoc problem-solving teams, teacher assistance teams, and collaborative planning and teaching teams (Thousand & Villa, 2000). In the 1970s the passage of the Education for the Handicapped Act in 1975 (P.L. 94-142) mandated the use of multidisciplinary teams to determine the eligibility of pupils for special education (Maher & Pfeiffer, 1983). In the 1980s, the business sector touted the advantage of quality circles and other collaborative groups that provide multiple perspectives and the expertise of a range of parties with a mutual stake in the outcome of an enterprise. In the 1990s, higher education has recognized that the development of a culture of collaboration may provide benefits by meeting student needs that cannot be met through existing bureaucratic structures.

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At IUPUI in the mid-1990s, unmet student needs created an institutional commitment to action. Retention figures for the campus were at an all-time low and as a result of those enrollment changes, at least one of the major academic units was in financial crisis. This dramatic opportunity for change resulted in a variety of collaborations. Two schools collaborated on the creation of a common core curriculum, and within the schools, collaboration at the course level accelerated with each school trying different modes of collaboration.

In 1994, the School of Liberal Arts (SLA) funded the creation of collaborative structures that were intended to address retention issues. Initially, SLA recruited a few veteran faculty members to provide intensive and comprehensive seminars for entering students. Faculty quickly recognized their need for support from advisors to address the full array of student needs that were affecting their performance. Soon it was deemed appropriate and desirable to team advisors and members of the teaching faculty with other members of the campus community who had additional areas of expertise. Thus, librarians and student mentors were added to the instructional teams to further the goal of achieving student academic success. Librarians were intended to acclimate students to the resources available through the new technologically advanced university library and equip students to use these resources in their coursework. The student mentor was added to serve as a knowledgeable peer who could function not only as an academic mentor, but also as a resource for students who often face numerous challenges outside the classroom that can interfere with their class performance. Student mentors were also seen as the most accessible team member because of their peer status and thus were expected to assist students with issues that they might not be as comfortable initiating with the other team members. Student mentors were also expected to be the link between students and the other team members by bringing student concerns to the attention of the appropriate team member.

While the School of Liberal Arts was experimenting with instructional teams, the School of Science was engaged in a separate collaborative venture. Science was developing a first-year course that would serve as an entrée to the world of science. The course "Windows on Science" was developed by a team that included two faculty members, a librarian, a student, an advisor, and an instructional technologist. The impetus for this course was the faculty's belief that students needed to be better acclimated to their responsibilities as new scholars and that they needed to be more fully engaged in their own learning processes. The Windows on Science course was piloted in the fall of 1996 and several sections were offered each year for the next three years. Based on their instructional experiences, several team members worked together to revise the course design and implemented the new course template for sections that were taught in the fall of 1999.

The creation of University College as an academic unit in 1998 further solidified the campus' use of instructional teams.

The Instructional Team Concept

Thousand and Villa (2000) have provided some identifying characteristics of collaborative teams:

- Coordinate their work to achieve at least one common, publicly agreed-on goal
- Hold a belief system that all members of the team have unique and needed expertise
- Value each member's input equally by having each engage in the dual roles of teacher and learner, expert and recipient, consultant and consultee
- Distribute task and relationship functions of leadership among all members
- Employ a collaborative teaming process that involves face-to-face interaction; positive interdependence; the performance, monitoring and processing of interpersonal skills; and individual accountability

Of these five traits, Thousand and Villa regard the collaborative teaming process as the most important and claim that when it occurs the other four traits fall into place. They further elaborated on the components of the collaborative teaming process:

- Face-to-face interaction among team members on a frequent basis
- Positive interdependence which is the feeling that 'we are all in this together'
- Small group interpersonal skills of trust, communication, leadership, creative problem solving, decision making, and conflict management
- Assessment of the team's functioning and goal setting to improve relationships and accomplish tasks more effectively

- Accountability among the members for agreed-on responsibilities and commitments

Permeating the concept of collaborative teamwork is the notion of mutual effort aimed at a mutual goal. Instructional team members may not know exactly what to expect from their colleagues, but are asked to assume that their colleagues' contributions will help them achieve something of value.

Instructional Team Dynamics

As instructional teams were developed at IUPUI, it became important for members to integrate their individual areas of expertise and achieve the capacity to pull together. These academic experts faced a big challenge to shift from individual domains of independence and responsibility as librarians, advisors, and faculty. Seldom would any have had experience working together with others in an academic team. Apparently this challenge is faced by teams in every setting:

> "By design and by talent, [we} were a team of specialists, and like a team of specialists in any field, our performance depended both on individual excellence and on how well we worked together. None of us had to strain to understand that we had to complement each others' specialties; it was simply a fact, and we all tried to figure out ways to make our combination more effective . . . . Off the court, most of us were oddballs by society's standards – not the kind of people who blend in with others or who tailor their personalities to match what's expected of them" (Russell & Branch, 1979).

Although this was Bill Russell's description of the acclaimed Boston Celtics basketball team, he could well have been describing instructional teams. Librarians, faculty, and advisors are all trained to be experts in a specialized area and are accustomed to being recognized for their individual expertise. Russell's concluding comment about sports figures could easily have been written about academics who seldom find themselves in instructional situations in which they need to "blend in."

The move away from a traditional reliance on a lone leader is a cultural shift, particularly for faculty. Academic culture places faculty members 'in charge' not only of their classrooms but also of the curriculum. Thus, the development of learning objectives, course plans, activities, assignments, and assessment of student learning have all traditionally been the domain of the faculty. The instructional team concept asks faculty to share roles and responsibilities that were previously solely theirs. Librarians and advisors also must shift their approaches to work effectively in instructional teams. Librarians are not accustomed to having ongoing responsibilities for student learning in the classroom. Traditionally, librarians work with individual students at the reference desk or provide library orientations for classes. Likewise advisors face new expectations as they move into broader responsibilities and no longer meet only with individual students in an office. Both librarians and advisors must build new skills in areas of pedagogy and student assessment to function effectively on instructional teams. Student mentors are also valued members of the IUPUI instructional teams and are expected to establish supportive relationships with students in their learning community. The student mentor helps provide an environment in which students are psychologically comfortable. Without suffering from the adversarial connotations of an ombudsman, the student mentor can act as a buffer between students and faculty when there are issues that either would be uncomfortable addressing with the other. The student mentor also serves as an exemplar—a physical embodiment of student success that a first-year student can use as a model for his or her own success. Through these peer relationships, first year students are helped to overcome potential obstacles to academic success, which invariably include personal issues as well as classroom performance difficulties.

Stages of Team Formation

Teams typically begin with an assigned project to carry out, but often are not given any preparation for establishing the necessary team processes through which their project results can be attained. Unfortunately the focus on results often leads the processes by which teams can achieve the desired results to be overlooked. Teamwork does not happen 'naturally,' and in fact requires considerable effort from the individual members in order to achieve their full potential as a team. There are four stages that a group typically experiences as it develops toward a fully functioning team: (1) Forming, (2) Storming, (3) Norming, and (4) Performing (Sholtes, Joiner, & Streibel, 1996).

- Forming is the initial stage during which attention is given to integrating members to working together. This period of transition focuses on moving from functioning as isolated individuals to becoming members of a team. Excitement mixes with anxiety and optimism mingles with doubt and suspicion. Slowly an attachment to the team forms.
- Storming characterizes the team dynamics as they move beyond the rather superficial connections that were made in the 'forming' stage. Team members may become frustrated with the perceived lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities. They may feel that no progress is being made on the work tasks and experience growing irritation with others on the team. Storming, as the name clearly shows, is a stage of conflict. To develop beyond

this stage, teams must establish processes that address individual concerns and manage conflict.

- Norming arises as the team develops the necessary rules to govern their work together. Members have now recognized the contributions that other team members can make and have formed a strong bond to the team. Norms may be quite informal and may simply be ways that the team has found to effectively interact with each other and pursue their work together. Developing these team processes takes time and sustained effort by the members to understand each other's talents and ideas and find ways to resolve differences. Norming is the stage that teams must achieve in order to truly focus on achieving their project task and not be interrupted by stormy conflicts.
- Performing is the ultimate stage of team development. Teams are fully engaged in their work and readily identify and resolve problems as they emerge. Members feel a strong bond to each other and manifest a loyalty to a common agenda. Synergy is often used to describe teams at this stage, because they are so well integrated that their capacity to spark the collective effort in an upward spiral is virtually unlimited. At this stage, the team's focus is on maximizing their collective potential without concern about receiving individual credit. Katzenbach & Smith (1993) have reported that high performing teams are extremely rare because they require a high degree of personal commitment to one another. An example of a high performing instructional team was reflected in the comments of Tony Stamatopolus, an IUPUI librarian, who described one of his eight instructional teams as "like a good marriage." He explained that they know each other well, and he reported that he does more for this team because of the important bonds that have developed among the team members.

He also pointed out that like a good marriage, it takes time and working together as a team for more than a semester to achieve this level of instructional teamwork.

As can be seen in this model, as teams develop their team processes, their capacity to achieve their tasks and produce results also grows. Ideally, teams progress through these four stages in a steady, upward direction. However, this model recognizes that teams often get stuck in one of the early stages or may experience some setback that causes the team to recycle through a previous stage before resuming its forward development.

Phases of Instructional Teams

In addition to the team's development through these four stages, instructional teams can be expected to have four phases that shape their work together. Discussion about the use of instructional teams in the First Year Seminar will focus on four areas: (1) team formation; (2) course design; (3) course implementation; and (4) assessment. Discussion of these phases of instructional teamwork will include data from a research study conducted by one of the authors. In her study, Van Voorhis interviewed 20 members of instructional teams that included 5 librarians, 4 advisers, and 11 faculty members.

Formation constitutes the first phase for an instructional team and can be accomplished fairly quickly unless complications arise. Complications may be common because all team members carry multiple responsibilities in addition to their assignment to instructional teams. Thus, changes in team composition may occur close to the start of a semester if the member's other assignments are changed. Similarly some assignments to instructional teams may occur at the last minute because the members' other responsibilities are not finalized until close to the start of the semester. As individuals are assigned to teams, they often receive at least broad definitions of their role on the team. Roles are often further defined as teams begin their work together. The formation phase concludes as those who have been assigned to an instructional team make arrangements to begin the process of developing plans for the course.

Course Design is the second phase of instructional teamwork and the members now begin the process of collaborating together on the structure of their course. Teams must develop the course objectives, assignments, and learning activities as well as determine the division of responsibilities. Sharing responsibilities and developing a process for working together are important if the task of designing the course is to be achieved and the foundation for teamwork is to be laid.

Course Implementation is the third phase of instructional teamwork and involves the delivery of the course that was planned in the previous phase. Conducting the classroom sessions constitutes the major component of this phase, and also includes various activities outside the classroom, as well as communication between instructional team members and individual students.

Assessment concludes the instructional team's work and includes evaluating the students' mastery of the learning objectives and assessing the team's instructional effectiveness. Student assessment culminates in the assignment of course grades and instructional teams typically discuss their instructional experiences as well as have students complete rating forms that assess the team's effectiveness. When the instructional team will be remaining together, their discussion often focuses on what they can do differently in the future.

Team formation

First year seminars haven't always been conducted by instructional teams. Initially, the IUPUI School of Liberal Arts recruited a few veteran faculty members and asked them to develop and conduct a course for entering students. While these faculty were accustomed to teaching, much more was to be done in order to advise and mentor these new students and insure their success in the university. As Professor Pat McGeever said, "We were supposed to do it all, but couldn't." Although these were all seasoned instructors, none felt prepared to respond to the array of student needs that existed outside the classroom. So these faculty members quickly turned to each other for support and tips on ways to accomplish the non-teaching aspects of this assignment. As they shared resources, they began the process of collaboration that would eventually become the norm for these first year seminars.

Thus, as instructional teams were formed at IUPUI, it became important for them to "learn how to tap the potential for many minds to be more intelligent than one mind" (Senge, 1990, p.236). How could they preserve the uniqueness of each individual while still achieving a coordinated effort? What are the best ways to harness all the talents of the instructional team members? IUPUI instructional team members, like musicians who aspire to perform in a symphony or jazz ensemble, had to learn how to play together.

As already discussed, developing instructional teams has unfolded in various ways across the campus. In SLA, faculty members were joined by academic advisors who assumed responsibility for the counseling that many students need for both academic issues and personal issues that invariably impact on their work as students. Next to join the team were the university librarians as the need to engage students in fully utilizing library resources from the start of their education was recognized. Mentors were identified as potential resources for aiding students with the multiple activities that most urban students juggle and a cadre of upperclass students was recruited to serve as peer mentors on the instructional team.

In the School of Science, their first year seminar, *Windows on Science*, has always used an instructional team that includes a faculty member, librarian, advisor, and student mentor. Nursing, Education, and Business have evolved an instructional approach that is adapted to the culture of each School. Like Science, teams usually include a librarian, adviser, and student mentor who work under the direction of a faculty member.

Roles

Faculty are understood to be the team leaders for the first year seminars, although there is not a uniform set of expectations about what the team leader's responsibilities are. One faculty member described her role as the "initiator who gets ideas on the table, incorporates other team members' ideas, seeks consensus, and divides up the tasks." As another professor gained experience working with an instructional team, she commented that she began to take responsibility for mentoring the other team members. Another faculty respondent reported that his experiences with the first year seminar led him to take charge of the team to prevent problems.

Librarians reported that they want to have an active role in designing portions of the course and want to actively engage in the student learning process. Taking a proactive approach contrasts to the traditional 'library instruction' model. The traditional approach to library orientation arose in response to faculty requests that were based on a limited understanding of the librarians' potential contribution. Including librarians in the course design permits the librarians' expertise to be incorporated in planning learning activities and assignments that transcend the notion of 'using the library' and encompass issues of how information is created, handled, and valued in an academic setting.

The librarian's role in the First Year Seminar places new demands on librarians, but provides them with new opportunities as well. One librarian discussed a new aspect of her role as a librarian which is to assume a mentoring relationship with students in her first year seminars. While this has not been a traditional part of the librarian's role, it is seen as valuable for librarians on instructional teams to make themselves available to meet with students outside the classroom and guide their work on projects. Overall, librarians seemed to view their goal with first year students as one of acculturating students to an academic environment, particularly the academic library as a component of that environment.

Librarians expressed concern that maintaining a classroom presence throughout the semester is not feasible as the number of First Year Seminars continues to grow. Therefore, they reported that they are developing greater use of information technologies to provide students with information-handling skills and library-use skills. Greater use of technology will permit librarians to achieve their instructional objectives without needing to be present for every class session.

Advisors reported that they attend all class sessions, but their involvement in the instruction varies widely (see Vermette, et al., this volume). Most advisors reported that they present information on specific topics such as time and stress management, study skills, tips for taking exams, and administer the Myers-Briggs instrument. Some advisors reported being "very well integrated" into the team in such ways as planning the course, conducting part of most class sessions, and sharing in the grading of some assignments. Other advisors were given only brief class time to make a few announcements or give weekly updates about matters of interest to students. Advisors also assist students with course registration and they regularly meet with individual students outside the classroom to address matters specific to the advisee. All advisors serve as the permanent advisor for students in their learning communities which contrasts to the usual approach of providing walk-in advising and thus developing few, if any, ongoing relationships with students. Advisors see this as a positive change in their role that permits continuity of advising for students rather than seeing "whoever drops in."

Most advisors have lengthened the work day to get it all done because they are much more involved with students than before they started working with instructional teams in the first year seminars. Although considerable time is devoted to attending several weekly classes for their assigned learning communities, advisors reported much satisfaction from having sustained contact with the same students. As one advisor said, "Seeing students in the classroom shows how they think unlike the office setting. It has built my interest in the bigger picture and finding ways to help the student improve." To recognize the time advisors need to maintain this level of participation in the First Year Seminars, their overall workload was reviewed and adjustments were made to their assignments. Specifically, advisors' time is now evenly divided and half of their time is to be spent attending class sessions and meeting with students in their learning communities. The remainder of their time is used for advising students who are not in learning communities and other responsibilities.

Course Design and Team Development

Having assembled an instructional team, the members must learn to work together in designing the course. For faculty, this generally involves adjusting from being the solo instructor who is responsible for all aspects of the course to becoming the team leader who orchestrates the work of all team members. For librarians and advisors, the role shift involves becoming actively involved in the various facets of instructing which initially focuses on designing the course outline, assignments, and weekly plans for class sessions.

Although faculty generally accept their responsibility for providing leadership for designing the course, few have prior experiences working with others in course design. Therefore, faculty report some initial struggle in finding ways to draw ideas from other team members and incorporate those ideas in the course design. Having been accustomed to working alone, some faculty seem to have difficulty including librarians and advisors in the planning and preparation of the first year seminar. Librarians and advisors report that they want to be involved in the planning and not just be assigned responsibilities to carry out during the semester.

Several people noted the obstacles to having all team members involved in planning the course. The primary obstacle seems to be the other responsibilities that each team member carries. Specifically, advisors have heavy responsibilities for Summer orientation sessions that occur weekly throughout the summer and make it difficult to take time for other activities, such as working with instructional teams to plan first year seminars for the Fall semester. Similarly, many faculty do not have summer appointments and thus are not readily available to plan Fall courses with their team members during the summer months. Obviously, if faculty members are taking the role of team leader, their lack of availability to initiate the course planning during the summer is a major block to having the team design the course.

A potential solution to insuring that all groups involved in instructional teams contribute to the course design seems to be emerging in some units. As already described, the School of Science has developed a course template that is used by all Science instructional teams. Their course template was recently revamped to better prepare entering Science majors. When the course template was re-designed, there was active involvement by the librarian, advisor, and faculty who had been teaching Windows on Science. Thus, their course template represents the ideas suggested by all three groups. Similarly, the School of Business designated a faculty member, Kim Donahue, to standardize the first year seminars that are taken by entering business students. Business has designed the format that is to be implemented in each section and oriented faculty to the implementation of this course design. While librarians and academic advisors are involved in the business instructional teams, their roles have been prescribed rather than including them in the design of the common course format.

Developing a course template for the First Year Seminar insures that a School can achieve more uniformity in the content and structure of the course while still using a variety of people on the instructional team. Another benefit is that representatives from all team constituencies can participate in the course design and do their planning together during the regular academic year when schedules for faculty and advisors permit somewhat more time for course planning. While there are clear advantages from creating a course template, it does delay the development of the individual instructional teams. When teams receive a course template, there is much less need to meet prior to the start of the semester because the course has already been designed. Thus, the team building that might have occurred in this phase in areas such as establishing patterns of communication, determining roles and responsibilities, and developing trust and working relationships, will coincide with the onset of the course.

In concluding the discussion of the course design phase of instructional teamwork, some observations about the emergence of the 'storming' and 'norming' stages of groups will be offered. When instructional teams are formed, members often come together with positive expectations about working with others from backgrounds that differ from one's own. Some anxiety may also be felt about how this team will be able to work together and many bring some doubt that an instructional team can be as effective as each individual performing his or her role alone in one's customary workspace. When teams engage in planning their First Year Seminar, they may move into the storming stage. In the process of trying to define the course objectives and determine the content and assignments, team members may become frustrated as they try to figure out how to work together in designing the course. Conflict may also arise as team members jockey to define roles and responsibilities that each will have for the course. Because team members are not accustomed to sharing the responsibilities for a course, competition may arise concerning who will grade student work or how much time faculty, librarians and advisors will have to conduct classroom sessions.

Developing ways to resolve conflict and address members' frustrations enables the team to move to the 'norming' stage. To reach this stage during the course design phase requires instructional teams to develop an understanding and appreciation for the talents that each member can offer to the team. Covey's (1989) "Seek first to understand, then to be understood" principle must clearly be operationalized so that a team can move beyond 'storming.' Given the inevitable time crunch that teams feel, the team often tries to focus almost exclusively on the task of getting the course designed. While understandable behavior, it prevents instructional teams from taking the time to build understanding of each other's ideas and expertise and delays the team's transition to the 'norming' stage. Furthermore, members must develop an understanding of the other team members and a recognition of what each can contribute before the instructional team can develop a meaningful division of the work that permits each team member's expertise to be fully used in the First Year Seminar.

In the 'norming' stage, instructional teams can readily agree on how they will work together on matters such as classroom responsibilities and assessing student performance. When teams achieve this stage, member doubts about the team's value and anxiety about how the team can work together have been addressed through a set of working rules and procedures that need not be formally written, but nevertheless provide a clear process for addressing individual concerns and resolving conflict. Furthermore, once the team has developed these ground rules for working together, they can truly focus on the team's task of designing and conducting the First Year Seminar.

For instructional teams that are provided with a course template or common syllabus, it is likely that moving beyond the initial stage of 'forming' will be delayed until after they begin to conduct the course that has been designed by others. Thus, 'storming' may not arise until several weeks of the semester have passed and individual members have become frustrated with such things as feeling that they don't get much class time to discuss matters they consider important or not being included in assessing students' work or thinking that their regular presence in the classroom is not adding value. Some instructional teams that enter the 'storming' stage after the course has begun may take the time to develop the necessary guidelines for responding to individual member concerns and frustrations. For other teams, the pressures of their busy schedules may prevent them from addressing the issues and paving the way to move into the 'norming' stage.

Implementation

To move from the traditional faculty-led classroom, instructional teams must develop the skills to share the task of teaching. To succeed, faculty must be receptive to opening up their classroom domain to include their team members in delivering the course. Because the First Year Seminar is intended to be broader than the content specific to the faculty member's discipline, it is vital that the advisor, librarian, and mentor be meaningfully integrated into the course to insure that the full spectrum of matters that are relevant to student success are addressed.

Delivering the first year seminar as a team requires ongoing discussion among the team members. Thus, several research respondents reported that their teams meet briefly after most class sessions to discuss the class that had just been completed. Others reported meeting periodically during the semester to discuss progress and revise course plans. Virtually all teams reported online discussions to insure that individual team members understood their responsibilities and that course plans were carried out in a coordinated manner.

Faculty discussed the adjustments that they have made to sharing responsibilities with other team members. Being accustomed to virtually total independence in their classrooms, faculty reported finding themselves challenged to identify and incorporate the strengths of their team members into the classroom instruction. Faculty also discussed their needing to become willing to have their ideas challenged by other team members. Faculty reported having grown to understand and appreciate the classroom instruction and assignments that librarians and advisors can contribute.

Similarly, librarians and advisors report having been challenged to take on new responsibilities that take them out of their comfort zone. For instance, librarians pointed out that they have not been prepared to teach, nor are they hired for their instructional skills. Thus, most have had to develop skills to conduct classroom discussions and present lectures, as well as construct assignments that assess student learning. One librarian commented that he has come to see the value of affective learning and not just rely on cognitive learning. Such understanding has led librarians to move from only giving students the mechanics of how to use an academic library to address why using the library has value for students' academic success. Another aspect of classroom instruction that is new for librarians and most advisors is working with more than one student at a time. Therefore, learning to work with groups of students is important.

Ultimately for librarians, advisors, and faculty to work together on instructional teams, they must create bridges and remove barriers to collaboration. This was captured by one advisor who said of her current team, "we're not so compartmentalized now." She elaborated by discussing her observations that advisors, librarians, and faculty who are not assigned to instructional teams are typically very segregated in their areas of responsibility. Only as they work together on instructional teams do they begin to take mutual responsibility for course implementation. As they develop their teamwork, they move beyond their segregated performances and integrate their work so that increasingly instructional responsibilities flow easily among the team members.

Several librarians and advisors were quick to say that they enjoy the teaching and find their involvement in the classroom a meaningful way to actively contribute to the educational mission. Advisors and librarians also commented that faculty often do not know how to make the best use of their expertise and so they need to help faculty see ways to integrate them throughout the semester and not just have them be responsible for one or two class sessions.

Assessment

An important aspect of instruction is assessing student performance. Teams are rather diverse in sharing responsibilities for developing and grading student assignments. Some teams have the librarian and the advisor each develop assignments related to information that each presents in the classroom. Often students receive feedback on those assignments from the librarian or advisor who developed the exercise. Librarians and advisors reported that sometimes they assign grades to their assignments that are counted toward the course grade. Other teams have developed assignments with each member contributing ideas that are integrated into the assignments. An example of an assignment that has been jointly developed by all team members is a diversity project that seeks to develop students' knowledge and respect for diversity. When projects have been jointly developed, all team members are involved in grading the written or oral work. Some librarians and advisors discussed their lack of experience developing assignments and establishing grading criteria. Advisors and librarians valued teams where they have been included in the process of creating assignments and meaningfully involved in the process of assessing students. Some faculty members are challenged by the prospect of sharing the responsibility for assessing students with their team. While the responsibility for reporting course grades is clearly vested with faculty, some faculty have creatively designed ways to include their team members in the process of evaluating student work and determining grades.

As instructional teams assessed their effectiveness as well as the impact of their First Year Seminars, changes have resulted. In the School of Science, they reviewed their instructional experiences after the first three years and decided to alter the course format. Their course now meets for two hours each week and concludes in the tenth week of the semester. Based on their teams' experiences they believed that entering students need intensive instruction to guide them past the semester's midpoint. The seminar has also been designed to be more like a science lab with regular projects to complete in class and little work assigned to be done away from the instructional team.

Based on their experiences working on instructional teams, members reported that teams contribute significantly to increasing student success through: (1) an expanded scope that addresses the whole student, not just their minds; (2) caring connections; and (3) decreased failing grades in the courses that are linked to the instructional teams' First Year Seminars.

- Expanded scope was discussed by many participants in Van Voorhis' study. They reported that having an instructional team engages more than the student's mind and by having a team that can address the array of students' needs, students are better able to focus their minds on learning. Faculty respondents often spoke about how circumscribed their domain of knowledge is and therefore how vital the other team members are to providing entering students with the comprehensive attention that is important to their academic success. As one faculty member reported, having advisors on the team is critical because students do not know the ropes and this permits them to form a relationship with their advisor through the weekly class sessions. Furthermore, a student mentor tends to be more approachable for entering students and can often find out why students miss class and what problems they are having in and out of classes.

- Members of instructional teams that participated in Van Voorhis' study often commented about the warm support that each team member extends to every student. Mentoring was a term that was used frequently to describe the individualized support and guidance that students in First Year Seminars receive from all team members, not just the student mentor. For example, librarians and advisors report that they are able to become much more involved with students because they have greater access to students through their roles on instructional teams. They believe that this is particularly valuable for entering students because having been engaged during their first semester in using the library resources and establishing ongoing relationships with their advisors, students have become connected in two areas that are vital to their overcoming obstacles to academic success.
- Reducing academic failure was a core objective for establishing instructional teams to conduct the First Year Seminars. While grades have not been consistently monitored in all units, data has been analyzed for students enrolled in the required writing course. That data has repeatedly shown that students who are NOT simultaneously enrolled in a team instructed First Year Seminar have two to three times the rate of failure in the writing course. Similarly, the School of Science sought to reduce the high rates of failure in their introductory courses in biology, chemistry, geology, math, and so forth. They regard their newly revised Windows on Science course as providing science majors with the preparation they need to meet the expectations of future courses in their major. This improved

preparation of entering science majors is attributed to the work of the advisor, librarian, and student mentor along with the faculty member on the instructional team.

Assessment of the instructional teams has also identified two areas of ongoing challenge: (1) developing high performing teams and (2) resources.

- Achieving high performing instructional teams was a concern expressed by several respondents in Van Voorhis' study. They frequently expressed the desire to keep the same teams together rather than having to learn to work with new team members. One respondent commented, " Instructional teams are too fluid and need to be able to keep working together so they can gel. Teams need to continue what's been started instead of starting over with new folks." Another respondent stated more bluntly, "Working teams should be left intact."
- Resources include both money and time, and instructional teams are widely recognized as requiring more resources than the traditional instructor-led introductory level course. Respondents frequently voiced concern about whether IUPUI would maintain the financial commitment that was initially invested in launching the instructional teams. Based on the positive assessments of the contributions of librarians, advisors, and peer mentors, the return on investment in instructional teams is certainly viewed as paying long-term dividends through sustained student enrollment and academic success. The issue of time effects advisors, librarians, and faculty who have multiple responsibilities and need workload guidelines that insure adequate time for this teamwork. A workload policy for advisors was recently adopted that permits them to devote 50 percent of their time to their work with students in their team-led courses. Librarians similarly report that the original model of having librarians present in the classroom throughout the semester is not sustainable. For

this reason, librarians have begun developing alternatives that incorporate the use of information technologies or that allow learning objectives devised by librarians to be realized through faculty efforts. Faculty also face growing difficulty in having their department chair or school dean recognize the time needed to lead an instructional team and grant the necessary workload reduction to fulfill team responsibilities. These assessments of time and workload point to the need for policies to better regulate the workload assignments of both librarians and faculty who are involved with instructional teams.

Conclusion

Team members repeatedly report that they make lasting connections with students in these First Year Seminars, and they believe that this is very meaningful for students. Thanks to instructional teams, students have a better appreciation for the culture and values of an academic environment. This includes a greater appreciation for the role of the academic library in the life of the university and for the role of information and information professionals in helping them attain their own life goals. Similarly, they connect with their advisor in the classroom and develop a relationship that extends well beyond the perfunctory once-a-semester meeting to plan for the next semester's courses. The faculty member and student mentor provide links to the student's future discipline and become long-term resources as the student plans for her or his future career. While relationships that are fostered perhaps cannot be quantified, instructional teams clearly add value and convey the message to their students that 'you matter.' They provide the needed supports and help remove obstacles that interfere with student success. In conclusion, it seems that instructional teams are making the connection with entering students that counters the urban student's 'fast food mentality' in which they drive to campus, go to class, and drive out.

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Faculty Development and Learning Communities

Barbara D. Jackson[1]

Abstract: Learning communities at IUPUI have presented an outstanding venue for faculty development. They have provided an opportunity for faculty innovations and risk-taking in the development of the transitions in faculty roles and academic culture that are anticipated for universities as we enter the next century, especially movement from highly individualistic ways of working towards collaboration and an emphasis on active student learning. This paper describes both the process and outcomes of our intentional efforts to incorporate faculty development as an integral part of the development of a learning community program.

An important aspect of the comprehensive development of learning communities at IUPUI has been the central role of faculty in developing curriculum, pedagogies , policies and assessment . As described in the essay by Gayle Williams (this volume), our institution has attempted to meet the needs of entering students with an extended orientation seminar. Some sections are offered by University College for exploratory students, but many sections offered by schools for their direct admits or for students expressing an interest in majors within them. All follow a template of common core curricular and pedagogical elements, but schools and instructors have a great deal of latitude in specific curricular content and manner of presentation. Building on national data on student success that identifies quality and extent of social connections as a critical variable in college student success, we have made establishing connections to the resources, people, skills and values of the university community a fundamental goal of the seminars. With a few exceptions, seminars are linked to form a learning community with another first year course, such as freshman composition or introductory psychology, often taught by the same instructor. The direct connection between the seminar and a regular disciplinary course provides an immediate and direct illustration of the seminar's content - the provision of a real laboratory in which to apply concepts presented in the seminar. The creation of a learning community—students together for two classes—also facilitates establishing a peer network and skills of collaboration in learning.

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Perhaps the most innovative and significant aspect of learning communities at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI) is the use of instructional teams to plan and present each section of the course. Resident faculty serve as team anchors, supported in a collaborative teaching effort by a librarian, an academic advisor, a student mentor and a technology specialist. Instructional teams operating collectively have shaped the seminar's philosophy, content and pedagogies, providing us with grassroots as opposed to top down program development.

New Initiatives Require Deep Faculty Involvement

Informed by the conclusions of scholars such as Paulsen and Feldman (1995) who clearly identify faculty involvement and ownership as vital to the development of an institutional culture that supports innovative teaching and improvement, we have practiced a conscious strategy of faculty engagement with the planning and implementation of initiatives to support entering students. At IUPUI this strategy has included efforts to engage faculty more fully in orientation, academic advisement, co-curricular programs, innovation in general education courses and most particularly our learning communities. The resident faculty's position of centrality in the university's missions of teaching and research position them to insure that such a program would be academically oriented and provide the new intervention with institutional status, credibility and stability.

At IUPUI faculty are seen as critical participants in effectively acculturating and introducing students to academia. Thus, faculty involvement was a requirement dictated by the perceived needs of the course and the students. Because few, if any, faculty had experience with teaching such a course, however, it was recognized early on that faculty would need initial help and ongoing support in learning how to teach the first year seminar. To this end, intentional faculty development elements were included from the beginning. In order to recruit and retain outstanding resident faculty to participate in learning communities we continue to be very attentive to faculty rewards and development outcomes.

For most faculty both content of the first year seminar and the instructional team format represent a significant change in the conduct of their professional responsibilities as university teachers. Initially, faculty rewards and incentives for participation were conceived of in a very traditional and somewhat limited way. They were identified primarily in terms of the obvious tangible elements - appropriate reductions in teaching load assignment, compensation in the form of merit raise increments, and supplemental support for standard professional needs such as summer stipends, research assistance, computers, and travel.

As the program has matured we have expanded our conception of the rewards faculty may derive from participation in such a program. Participating faculty have consistently asserted that the experience of teaching the seminars (and simultaneous participation in the community that develops them) has been personally rewarding and contributed to professional growth. Such assessments have led us to the understanding that faculty development may be seen as both an unanticipated individual reward and a beneficial institutional outcome. These personal and professional benefits include improvement in teaching in regular assignments and greater articulation to the broader university community and its resources. Such benefits are now regarded at IUPUI as important complements to traditional programs of faculty rewards and incentives.

Learning Community Program administrators at IUPUI have implemented a number of intentional and highly visible strategies for the support and recognition of faculty who contribute to the program's development. These include an annual colloquium that serves as orientation for new participants as well as the frequent use of speakers and consultants of national and regional prominence. Intentional community building with both social and professional elements to encourage bonding, conversation and facilitate collaboration continues to be a significant aspect of the program. Traditionally recognized forms of faculty enhancement including support for conducting research on pedagogy and its dissemination at conferences and in peer-reviewed publications is an important incentive for many faculty, particularly those seeking tenure and promotion. Finally, we vigorously nominate and support nominations for university teaching and service awards for faculty who have made significant contributions to learning communities.

"Best Practices" For Faculty Development

Our experience affirms the following as "best practices" for a faculty development strategy.

- **Create an environment in which faculty can claim real decision-making power.**

At IUPUI faculty have been offered and have claimed ownership and have exercised real decision-making power for development, implementation and continuing improvement of the first year seminar program. This "ownership" provides the foundation for the enhancement of faculty skills and competencies discussed above. It provides an inviting framework for faculty to come together as peers to discuss, develop and assess ways of meeting student needs in new and creative ways.

- **Support a wide array of activities, programs, interventions and occasions for faculty development appropriate to particular individual, disciplinary and programmatic needs including those that are formal and structured as well as highly informal and spontaneous.**

Types that have been especially embraced by faculty at IUPUI include:

- Specific **task-based activities associated with aspects of program development.** (e.g. small groups or committees working to identify pedagogical hits, technology curriculum, interface with orientation, defining course goals and common requirements).

-Occasions for quality **reflective activity**. In addition to time allocated course planning and preparation for teams, it is important to structure occasions for both "brainstorming" and sustained reflective activities. Examples of such are: planning symposia, assessment and other research associated with the program, and seminar-like groups that prepare presentations and publications. This is the kind of work valued by faculty, and derived from their strengths.

- Encouraging the development of **mechanisms for individual and mutual support** such as peer mentorship where experienced first year seminar faculty are partnered with beginner and regular informal "help" sessions in which peer support is provided are especially important with regard to encouraging the development of self-reflection, inter-group dynamics and community building abilities.

- **Align products, outcomes with traditional academic reward structure, where possible**. In the broader administrative environment of universities our support of faculty development must encompass appropriate attention to documenting and assessing contributions and accomplishments associated with student learning so that these count in regular tenure, promotion, awards and salary increase determinations. Attempt to avoid conflict with home departments, regular responsibilities
- **Provide a national context**. As important, productive and satisfying as work with one's campus colleagues has proven to be at IUPUI, outside stimuli and the ability to place campus perspectives in a broader context have served to enhance faculty development outcomes. We have regularly sought quality outside resources in support of issues identified as critical to the campus and have encouraged faculty to attend conferences and workshops with national leaders on such issues.

Faculty Development Outcomes

The most easily seen measure of success has been our ability to sustain faculty engagement and participation. We began the program in 1994 with seven resident faculty whose dedication and accomplishments in undergraduate education were well-established. The program ownership by these "early adopters" and their professional satisfaction with participation has allowed the program to become institutionalized, with learning communities, numbering over 100, currently offered to all first semester students by all undergraduate schools. While faculty resources and the demands of discipline-based teaching do not permit every first year seminar to be conducted by a resident faculty, leadership and oversight of these courses rests with faculty in each school, and all involve senior faculty in a direct and meaningful fashion.

As reported in Evenbeck, Jackson, McGrew (1999), some of our earliest assessment indicated that IUPUI faculty involved in learning communities describe the wide array of positive professional development outcomes directly associated with their participation in learning community instructional teams.

This data affirms the conclusions of Austin and Baldwin (1991) that three of the most common benefits faculty attribute to collaboration around teaching are "…development of their teaching ability, new intellectual stimulation, and a closer connection to the university…as a community." (41)

Faculty clearly and consistently articulate that such participation in learning communities has resulted in improvement in teaching strategies applied to regular courses, including the garnering of new perspectives or a greater depth of knowledge within the person's discipline. These outcomes include:

-more effective discipline-based teaching

-increased understanding of student perspective

-learn and practice new pedagogies – e.g. collaborative learning

-enhanced technology and library skills

-more student-centered approach to learning

-integration of more multi-disciplinary perspectives.

One important result of faculty involvement in first year seminar is that **faculty begin to see beyond their own discipline and to view themselves as part of a university community.** Since the curriculum of the first year seminars often takes faculty outside their disciplines both in curriculum content and, oftentimes, in actual physical space, faculty have the opportunity to interact with other faculty and staff from different disciplines and service areas across the campus. In this way they come to a better understanding of their roles and place within the University community. From this interaction with other disciplines and services, faculty come to view both academic and non-academic functions from perspectives other than their own, that is, from the students' or the University's. As one of the faculty explained, "My teaching responsibilities extend not only to my students who are French [her discipline] majors, but they include Tiffany, who is trying to get into the School of Social Work, and Tim, who needs help from the Office of Adaptive Educational Services, and Jennifer, who needs to interview a faculty member for a writing assignment in her English class." By interacting with other university staff on behalf of their students, faculty learn more about campus services than they ever imagined existed. They become acquainted with all aspects of campus life from parking services to mental health services, from the Writing Center to the Technology Unit. Faculty come to realize that all faculty and staff in the University share some common goals and that is the success of all students, no matter what their major or their field of specialization.

Another major outcome of learning community participation reported by faculty is that they **gain a much more comprehensive understanding of who students are and the students' perspective on learning**. Through the learning community experience many faculty realize that they are as unprepared with their traditional methods to meet students where they are as the students are unprepared to deal with the academic expectations that the faculty have for them. First year students of the late nineties come from a wide-range of economic, ethnic, social, and high school backgrounds. A growing number of them work to support themselves and to pay for their schooling; many are parents themselves, even at the age of eighteen, and many seem to lack sufficient commitment to learning yet are determined to obtain that all-important "education" that is represented by a college degree. Understanding the realities of what students bring to the academic experience has informed the methods of teaching employed by first year seminar faculty. Class size is held to a maximum of 25 students in order to allow more personal interaction between the instructional team and the students. Many faculty have adopted a formal "Student Profile" form which asks students to talk about themselves and their academic and professional goals as a way of getting to know each of the students individually. In many cases, faculty also require student to schedule individual interviews with each member of the team at some time early in the semester. In these ways, both faculty and students are better able to bridge the gap of unpreparedness that is characteristic of both of them in today's university environment, affording students more effective access to the university community.

Engagement in first year seminars affords faculty members more **opportunities to understand how a subject is learned rather than how it is taught, how to employ students' unique aptitudes and talents for assimilating a new body of knowledge to help them learn.** For example, a history colleague reports that through the process of assigning on e-mail the analysis of unidentified history documents from the cultures and time periods being studied in the Western Civilization class, he can determine students' critical reading, writing, and information processing skills. This has inspired his own reflection on the difficulties inherent in deciphering and interpreting ancient historical documents. Involvement in first year seminars enlightened this professor about his own particular discipline as he grew in understanding of his students.

The team structure that under girds the whole first year seminar philosophy **has invited faculty members to work collaboratively in new ways.** The concept of team teaching has taken on new meaning for members of learning community instructional teams. The challenge of collaboration in a team of four-faculty, librarian, counselor, and student--has been just as great an effort for faculty in the first year seminars program as it has been for students who are expected to function collaboratively in the classroom in the program. An English colleague explains how preparing her syllabus in collaboration with team members was a learning experience for her. At first, she expected that she would be the only one who had carefully studied the text and would, therefore, make all the suggestions and, ultimately, write the syllabus as she had always done in her courses. To her surprise, the session where the team prepared the syllabus was not at all like that. The advisor offered invaluable insight into the needs of the students, such as other courses the students would be taking and the number of hours they would probably have to work each week. From this the teaching team incorporated time management activities, registration planning, and self-help class sessions into the course syllabus. In addition to suggesting innovative ideas on how to acquaint beginning students with an electronic library, the team's librarian proposed creative projects that demanded student involvement with many different services available in the library from the data bases to the reserve section to the reference desk. The input of the student mentor presented a whole new perspective on learning. She was able on more than one occasion to suggest additional workshop material for helping students take a realistic look at their own academic progress and to caution team members when they were overloading students with unnecessary assignments. The most notable result of this collaborative syllabus preparation was a better syllabus--broader, more comprehensive and at the same time, more directly addressing the goals of the course and the needs of the students. The collaborative success that produced a student-centered, learner-focused syllabus then, to the faculty member's surprise, naturally carried over into the first year seminar classroom. This experience not only gave the faculty member greater insight into the collaborative process, including both its challenges and its rewards, but it allowed the team to model what they were trying to teach their students.

Yet another developmental opportunity for first year seminar faculty is **gaining mutual respect and appreciation for colleagues' disciplines and their attendant challenges.** A freshman composition student stayed after class one day to talk to his English teacher who also teaches a first year seminar. The student opened the conversation with "Do you know Dr. Robbins in history." He continued, "Well, I was in his history class and was not doing well. He told me to take your composition course and then come back and pass his history class." What the student did not realize was that because of their involvement in the program and through the various discussion sessions that faculty attend, both the English instructor and the history instructor had had many opportunities to discuss ways their respective disciplines complement each other. They were able, therefore, to call upon this knowledge and to advise the student about what he needed and what would guarantee his success as a student in a history class.

An expectation of the seminars is that students learn to realistically assess their own academic progress in their university courses. When, under the time management unit, students chart the requirements of their courses in a semester against the backdrop of their own busy lives, faculty **come to appreciate and respect demands of other disciplines on "their" students'** time. It is a known fact that all faculty have been guilty of believing that their course is the only course their students are taking in a particular semester. Realization that students have many other requirements has led one faculty member to encourage students to plan ahead and list specific tasks in their semester planner to prepare for the psychology exam and the anthropology paper that will be due on the same date as work in the seminar. This mutual respect for other course demands demonstrates to students that faculty see themselves as part of an academic community, while helping the students learn to respect the requirements of all their courses and the demands on their time.

A very practical aspect of faculty development results from getting to know other faculty members personally. Meeting together regularly provides not only "group therapy" sessions for those just beginning with the program, but an **opportunity to share insights and activities that are helpful to each other.** For example, at one of these meetings the idea of the "Reality Check" was introduced whereby students use a formula to realistically ascertain their own progress in each course. This activity has now been incorporated into the curriculum of most seminar sections. The time spent together in these meetings not only gives faculty new ideas but offers a safe place where frustrations can be discussed, failed attempts analyzed, and successes shared, thereby relieving some of the loneliness that often is a part of college teaching. Faculty have come to see themselves not only as colleagues but as friends and fellow scholars in an academic community.

Another practical outcome of the program is that **participation enhances the technology and library skills of the faculty.** By using new learning tools in the seminar, faculty have learned how to create power point presentations, use the Web to support career discussions, and negotiate new media for information alongside their students. The team interaction of the faculty member, the librarian, and the technology expert assigned to each instructional team provides opportunities for the faculty to develop proficiency in areas that in many cases have remained underutilized. These skills enrich the faculty's performance in the first year seminar as well as in their disciplinary courses and in their professional lives.

Faculty are also enthusiastic about expanded opportunities for the development of research and scholarship related to teaching. They take advantage of our intentional strategies of providing support for presentations and publications. The establishment of an internally funded research project within University College has created the opportunity for faculty to conduct generously supported research on various aspects of the learning community program. These Faculty Fellows whose work has focused on the role s and functioning of instructional teams, as well as assessing the curriculum and student satisfaction with learning communities has provided an opportunity for faculty to engage in formal scholarship of teaching activities, as well as provide University College with important program assessment. Faculty have made numerous conference presentations and have begun to publish results in both general higher education as well as discipline-specific venues.

Conclusions

Learning communities at IUPUI have provided an outstanding opportunity for multiple levels of faculty development by enhancing faculty skills and competence in many domains relevant to their faculty roles. This development has been both formal and informal. And has varied in terms of the degree to which it has is an explicit or implicit goal. For example, formal faculty-development programs focus on development as a primary goal (e.g., teaching workshop), whereas other faculty activities may provide opportunities for development, but only as a secondary or ancillary goal e.g., general colloquia). One could argue, in fact, that faculty development (like human development itself) is an ongoing and unavoidable feature of all faculty work, sometimes incidental, sometimes explicit, sometimes formal and sometimes informal.

The purview of faculty development is quite broad and can include virtually all dimensions of faculty work. Thus, faculty development may occur across various faculty roles (i.e., teaching, service, and scholarship/research) and university organizational structures (i.e., departmental, school, and university). In addition, faculty development may have as its focus a specific academic discipline, or may occur more generally. These three dimensions of faculty development (i.e., faculty role, organizational structure, and discipline-specific vs. general) are conceptualized as independent of each other and interact to form a 3x3x2 matrix. Traditional faculty development programs usually target one or at most two cells in this matrix, whereas non-traditional programs such as the learning communities may impact multiple cells. The model can be used to differentiate between programs, according to their explicit or implicit goals. Also, within this framework, program goals and program outcomes can be modeled separately. That is, although a program may target one area, it may have outcomes in multiple areas.

Applying the model to the learning communities, we use both formal programs of faculty development (e.g. orientations and workshops) and informal faculty development elements (e.g. the creation of opportunities for communication and mutual support among participants). Moreover, development is aimed primarily at teaching and primarily at the university level. Teaching development focuses both on course specific content (e.g. goals of course) and on learning pedagogical strategies that are new or unique to the course (e.g., instructional teams, use of student collaborative groups). In terms of goals, then, the explicit faculty development goals focused on teaching at the university level.

In terms of outcomes, however, in addition to the anticipated outcome of enhanced faculty teaching at the university level, there were several unexpected outcomes. Thus, for many faculty, there were developmental outcomes at the school and departmental levels (i.e., informed their teaching generally). In addition, there were developmental outcomes for both service (e.g., development of interest in, and understanding of, university goals for retention) and scholarship (e.g., national presentations). In effect, faculty development outcomes of the learning communities went beyond simple teaching at the university level (a single cell), and extended across levels of the university, across faculty roles, and across discipline specific vs. general application (multiple cells of the matrix).

An important example of such an outcome has been the establishment of a comprehensive professional community at IUPUI based on a mutual interest in the success of entering students . This has involved enhanced collegiality among faculty across disciplinary lines and the connection of faculty to other professionals on campus.

Learning communities at IUPUI have presented an outstanding venue for faculty development. By fostering the critical elements educators endorse as appropriate for learning in the 21st century. They have provided an arena to implement the transitions in faculty roles and academic culture that Eugene Rice (1991) and others anticipate for universities as we enter the next century. These transitions include movement from a faculty center (who we are and what we know) to a more student and community responsive institution. It involves a movement from highly individualistic ways of working (my work) to collaboration and engagement (our work). It involves a movement from the passive learning of unexamined assumptions to active learning and a culture of evidence. It will involve the idea that the university should be the center of public life and democratic participation rather than as an elite, separate world.

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Changing Roles, Assuming New Responsibilities: The Academic Advisor in the Urban University

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Abstract: At Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), the student body is diverse demographically, academically, and motivationally. As in most urban institutions of higher education, students at IUPUI live, work, and raise families in the greater metropolitan area. They have complex, and often complicated, lives that frequently set up hurdles — if not outright roadblocks—along their path to a university degree. Although the number of traditional age students on campus is growing, the average age of the student body is still above 25. Advising these students whose main priority is not necessarily their education poses real challenges for advisors. In response to these challenges, IUPUI has responded by restructuring the role of the advisor and increasing advisor involvement in learning communities.

The challenges that advising at an institution with a highly diverse student population, as well as with a highly complex set of 22 separate and autonomous academic units offering more than 150 baccalaureate and associate degrees, are immense. The traditional one-on-one advising model is virtually impossible to implement or maintain in such a multifarious academic environment. Given the large number of degree programs available at IUPUI, and given the nature of our urban, largely commuter student population, it is crucial that students receive efficient and effective advising, both developmental and academic, from the outset. However, with a limited number of advisors in University College, which houses the general advising unit for the campus, and a new freshman enrollment upwards of 3,000 each fall semester, new models for providing effective advising had to be developed.

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The interest in developing new models for advising coincided with the realization at IUPUI that it takes an entire campus community, working together collaboratively, to enhance student learning, to be able to provide students with the opportunities and support essential for academic success. Each unit has vital resources and talents to contribute that are needed to help students become successful learners. In response, therefore, to the need for stronger, more individualized advising, along with the realization that all stakeholders in the campus have a role to play in enhancing student learning, IUPUI has adopted a collaborative approach to providing first-year students with the high level of individualized advising that will help them to integrate well into their new academic community. The first-year learning communities, whose organizational home, like that of the advisors, is in University College, have as a goal to provide students with those personal relationships and access to the university's resources that will lead them to become better learners and more successful students in this new academic environment (Evenbeck and Williams, 35-36).

The integrated model for first-year learning communities that IUPUI has been developing since 1995 has become a cornerstone of our campus philosophy. This model has at its core four-member instructional teams that include a faculty member, a University College advisor, a librarian, and a student mentor who together share the responsibility to improve student learning and who work to increase the student success rate at IUPUI. These teams bring into the classroom, on a regular basis, experts from the campus community in areas essential to student success. They extend in fact the teaching function of the university to members of units not traditionally viewed as *educators* by the academic community.

Whether traditional-aged or 25-plus, our students, like those at other urban institutions, share many of the same characteristics. They are generally first-generation college students with limited resources in the way of money, technology (computers, modems), and basic reference materials, to say nothing of limited emotional and intellectual support at home. Many of these students are unaware of what is needed to succeed in an academic community. Moreover, they do not readily see the campus as a community, especially not as "their" community. They often feel like strangers on campus because they do not understand the language or the social and behavioral codes of this community. Many of these students have heavy family responsibilities that demand much of their time and energy on a daily basis. Juggling school and home life can be very difficult for them.

Many of IUPUI's students work 25, 30, 40 or more hours a week to support themselves or their families. School expenses are often an added burden in an already stretched financial situation. Workloads outside of school take up much of their time, and the scheduling of meetings with advisors or professors, working on collaborative projects with classmates, or participating in mentoring and supplemental learning programs are extremely difficult to arrange. Just commuting to campus, hunting for a parking space, and getting to class are taxing endeavors, and finding time to study as is needed is almost impossible.

It is especially difficult for many of the students at IUPUI, in particular first-semester students, to achieve the success that they expect of themselves because they are deficient in certain academic skills essential for college-level work. Reading, writing, and mathematical skills are often not on a par with the students' counterparts on most residential campuses; their note-taking and test-taking skills have not been properly developed either. Largely because of the absence of a junior college system in the state of Indiana (at least until 2000), IUPUI has functioned for most of its history as an open-admissions institution for the central Indiana area. For that reason, the level of preparation of a large number of IUPUI's undergraduate student population is more typical of that of community college students. The number of conditionally admitted students — that is, of students who do not meet the minimum standards for direct admission to the university — is inordinately high. In Fall 1999, for example, the conditionally admitted students represented two-thirds of the beginning freshman class. Concomitantly, the dismissal rate is high among this group of students. Until the academic year 1999-2000 the number of part-time students at IUPUI had been greater than the number of full-time matriculants.

The motivations that lead students to IUPUI are as diverse as the student body itself. When the going gets rough, or they encounter one of the hurdles or roadblocks that can so easily crop up in their lives, students sometimes find it easier to slip away from the university than to continue to attend classes. It is easy for commuter students to resume their non-academic lives and to become fully integrated once again into the world of family and peers. The student behaviors that they were exhibiting as university students and that were perceived as evidence of divided loyalties are no longer branding them as "different" in the communities in which they grew up. Overcoming obstacles such as a jealous husband (one of our student's husband, in order to dissuade his wife from attending IUPUI and pursuing a college education, actually burned her books, the "tools" of her new job) can be monumental struggles. Some succeed, often because of the support and encouragement they receive from an advisor, or a professor, or a fellow student. Others, sadly, do not.

In light of the multiple situations and needs of students on IUPUI's urban campus, the faculty-advisor partnership in the first-year learning communities is especially crucial. Together, the faculty member and the advisor are uniquely positioned to provide academic, social, and personal support to individual incoming students both within a classroom setting and in conversations and meetings with these students outside of the classroom. By changing their roles, advisors are assuming new responsibilities in the educational process at IUPUI. Defining clearly these expanded roles, identifying new responsibilities, and providing the framework that advisors need to be able to fulfill their new job definitions present a continual challenge.

The changing roles and new responsibilities of advisors have created a need for tremendous adaptability and flexibility as well as a new enthusiasm for having a greater and more positive impact on students' lives. This new era in advising presents advisors with the opportunity to do their jobs better by creating an informed, well-equipped freshman class and by teaching students how to utilize and benefit from academic advising. A goal of the learning communities is that students will come to value advisors as one of their greatest resources at the University.

The major change that has occurred over the past few years is the increasingly proactive approach that is being taken through the learning communities with all incoming students new to the university. The advisor's participation on the instructional team has resulted in the advisor's increased availability to students, essentially providing them the opportunity to meet with their advisor on a weekly basis. Advisors attend their assigned learning community classes every week in order to be available to students and to be able to establish a relationship with them. "Instead of waiting and hoping that students will come to us," one advisor stated, "we go to them."

The advisor's role in learning communities is diverse and multifaceted. One role is that of provider of information. Some of the advisors' most important work is done in conversations with individual students before and after class. Students approach advisors with questions that they might not otherwise ask if the advisors were not there in the classroom with them. It also gives advisors the chance to approach students with concerns that they have about them based on behavior that has been observed in the classroom or information received from faculty members and from other sources.

The classroom setting also assures the delivery of vital information to the student at key points in the semester. This is important with a largely commuter student body. We no longer have to rely solely on mass mailings that sometimes either go unread or get lost in transit. Advisors are able to remind students face-to-face that it is time to meet with them and to register for classes or let them know that there is an interesting event occurring on campus. Some advisors present a "tip of the week" to their classes, covering topics ranging from how to calculate a grade point average to how to find information on the IUPUI website. All of these efforts reduce the advisors' dilemma about how to make connections with students on an urban commuter campus. Learning communities enhance their advising role by allowing advisors to focus more intensively on their advisees.

The advisors' role on instructional teams has also had an effect on their view of advising by allowing them to contribute more directly to the educational mission of IUPUI. As members of an instructional team, they are now involved in both instruction and curriculum development. They assist in both planning and implementing learning community courses. Advisors are beginning to discuss the notion of advising as teaching rather than merely providing information. As they become more involved in the role of educator, advisors, in collaboration with the other members of the instructional team, are helping to empower students and to provide them with the tools they need for success in college as well as for lifelong learning.

In addition to the activities within the classroom, advisors meet individually with learning community students in their offices. Our students are now required to meet with their advisor before they are allowed to register for the next semester. To be sure that this requirement is met, all new students are placed on a computerized checklist that prevents them from registering until the advisor authorizes clearance from the checklist.

An innovative and effective accomplishment related to learning communities involves registration. Beginning in Fall 1999, learning community students register together as a class during class time for the next semester. The faculty member, advisor, and student mentor all contribute to the process. The positive outcomes from this group registration have been threefold. First, it allows advisors to make sure that all students register early, while classes are still open. In addition, advisors can check students' schedules to be sure that they registered for appropriate courses. A third benefit is that students can collaborate with each other on their schedules and arrange to take classes together the next semester, thereby maintaining the student-to-student connections that they have made during the semester. By being there to facilitate this type of activity, the advisors are able to contribute to the university's goal of improving retention. Advisors will also continue to advise their learning community students in subsequent semesters until they are ready to transfer to their degree-granting school. In this way, advisors are able to continue to foster the connections that they establish with their learning community students each semester.

Another effort that is essential to the advisors' more proactive approach to working with students is the early warning system that is used not only with learning community students but with all Freshmen. The system has evolved over several years from a tedious, time-consuming process involving hundreds of totally handwritten forms to a system that is now completely automated, thus allowing advisors to reach a much greater number of students in a more efficient manner. Advisors use the system to identify and contact students early in the semester who are reported by their instructors to be having academic difficulties. While students not in learning communities receive a computer-generated letter, advisors are able to discuss the reports one-on-one with their learning community students. They identify useful resources and determine appropriate courses of action for each individual student.

As an outcome of their work with learning communities, advisors at IUPUI have become generalists rather than specialists in regard to knowledge about schools and majors available on the campus. Advisors are assigned as liaisons to specific schools, which means that the advisors are responsible for maintaining contact with the schools and keeping their colleagues on the advising staff updated about changes in requirements and policies within "their" particular school. They are also responsible for maintaining and updating the check sheet(s) which list the specific course requirements for each degree within their school. However, because many learning communities consist of students with a variety of majors, every advisor must acquire and maintain a thorough working knowledge of every major in order to be able to advise his or her learning community students.

Prior to the advent of learning communities, advisors worked on teams within the advising unit led by team captains and specialized only in certain majors. As advisors began, however, to spend more and more time in learning communities, they discovered that they did not have enough coverage to advise walk-in students when the available advisors could only see students with specific majors. Therefore, all advisors were trained to know about all majors through weekly meetings, information sessions with schools, and staff retreats.

The change to being generalists has been a positive force for advisors, which has resulted in self-imposed pressure to improve themselves and their level of knowledge and awareness about majors and campus resources. In addition, many advisors have found it necessary to improve or develop skills in new areas. For example, advisors who have not been comfortable in public speaking situations in the past now find it necessary to develop that skill in order to present classroom sessions on topics essential to our students such as time management, stress management, study skills, critical thinking, and personality/interest testing. Developing the workshops also requires reading and research in certain areas. When one particular school, for example, decided to use the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator in all of its learning communities in Fall 1999 and wanted the advisors to administer the test and interpret the results, several advisors who were not familiar enough with the instrument to be able to lead a class session on it found themselves utilizing resources such as the library, the Internet, campus experts, and other members of their instructional teams before presenting the workshop. Other advisors have found it necessary to improve their computer skills in order to assist students with registration and lead class sessions on navigating various portions of the IUPUI website.

All of these new roles and responsibilities have also resulted in a most necessary and major restructuring of how advisors use their time. It has become necessary to practice what we preach to our students — efficient and effective time management. Although it often seems that advisors are doing more work, they are really just doing the work that needs to be done in a different way. This includes carrying out activities such as seeing walk-in students as well as students with scheduled appointments, conducting workshops, interviewing students seeking reinstatement, preparing for classes, attending learning communities and advisor, staff, and committee meetings, and participating in orientation and training activities.

In addition to changes in how advisors use their time, they have also changed their work hours to accommodate better students' schedules. Advisors are available for advising until 7:00 PM during the week, and the unit is open on Saturdays. New student orientations are held on many evenings and weekends, and learning communities are offered evenings and weekends also. These extended schedules of availability are all necessary to accommodate the complex lives of students at an urban commuter campus.

Advisors began to examine the process of restructuring the use of their time during Summer 1999 under the leadership of one the University College faculty fellows. Several models were discussed throughout the summer by the entire advising staff before the advisors voted to adopt an "equal time" model wherein all advisors would be allotted the same amount of time for various activities. They decided to devote forty-five percent of their time to general advising of walk-in students and another forty-five percent to learning community-related activities, including class time, preparation time, instructional team meetings, and one-on-one advising. The remaining ten percent of an advisor's time is spent on administrative tasks such as advisor, staff, and committee meetings, and dealing with e-mail and voice mail messages. Advisors develop an individual schedule each semester based upon these guidelines. This plan has provided a needed structure and consistency for how time is spent while still allowing for flexibility within each schedule.

Although this model works well for all full-time advisors, there are some advisors in "split" positions who do not fit neatly into such a set time scheme. These advisors work out a schedule as close as possible to the prescribed model. The split appointment is another recent innovation in advising in University College. An increasing number of advisors are being hired to spend half of their time at University College and the other half in a specific school, department, or student services office on campus. This has resulted in diverse collaboration between University College and a variety of campus constituencies, as well as a host of benefits for University College advisors and students. One advisor, for example, spends half her time with the advising unit and the other half with the School of Nursing. Another spends half her time with University College and the other half as a professor of biology. A third advisor spends the other half of her time as a counselor in the Office of Admissions. The advisors in split positions are an extremely valuable resource for the full-time University College advisors and graduate students on assistantships with the unit. Spending half of their time in another department gives them the opportunity to become experts in that area. Full-time University College advisors rely on those with split positions to keep them updated and to provide information about their areas.

The split position is also a benefit to students. In the past, students became comfortable with their University College advisor but then had to adjust to a new advisor when they transferred to their degree-granting school. Now students can stay with the same advisor from orientation through graduation. There is a sense of continuity and commitment on both sides. More of these positions will be developed because they have proven to be a positive addition to the advising unit's plan to establish and maintain connections with our students and with departments and faculty across campus.

Another new initiative involving collaboration with departments and faculty has been implemented through the unit's new student orientation program called *Connections*. Advisors have always conducted a "major presentation" session during orientation in which students are grouped by major and presented with information about that major. These sessions are now conducted with a faculty member and/or administrator from the major department or school. Advisors and students benefit from this opportunity to make connections already with faculty at orientation.

The new connections that advisors are now establishing with faculty have been one of the most significant outcomes of the changes that have been implemented since the creation of University College. Through these connections, the importance of the advisor's role at IUPUI has become more visible and acknowledged on campus. Advisors are establishing greater credibility as vital members of the University community. They are serving side by side with faculty on various important campus-wide committees. The advisors' role is now viewed as highly relevant to student retention.

A major benefit of learning communities and instructional teams has been the true partnership that has developed between advisors and faculty. All members of the instructional team realize the value of collaborating to provide students with the tools they need to achieve success. Although the faculty member is the team leader, and is, therefore, ultimately responsible for charting and carrying out the course for a learning community, advisors are viewed as integral members of the team. They have gained respect and recognition for their general knowledge about the University and their unique ability to assist students in making the transition from high school to college through their years of experience and training in working with first-semester students. Team members and students share information and knowledge and learn from each other in the learning community setting. Every semester is truly a collaborative experience.

Learning communities have given advisors a golden opportunity to create a better understanding of and appreciation for what they do and what they have to offer students and the rest of the campus. Several faculty members have commented that they had not realized the scope of the advisors' function until they became involved with advisors on instructional teams. The changes that have resulted from their involvement with faculty have increased the sense of value and importance of advisors as members of the IUPUI community.

Adapting to the obvious needs of our urban student population has brought a host of new players onto the educational field at IUPUI. The changes that have occurred in the advisors' role over the past few years are the result of hard work, collaboration, creativity, and experimentation on the part of administrators, faculty, advisors, and other campus personnel. As a result, IUPUI has become a more challenging, innovative, and exciting place of endless possibilities for everyone. Together, we have learned always to aim higher than the status quo and to seek and anticipate changes for the better.

Advisors, faculty, and staff alike at this urban university can understand more clearly now why one academic described teaching and advising college students as "the most exciting and satisfying professions in American society." (Fried, 10) At this urban institution, we have learned through experience that it takes a *whole* university of educate a student body. And cracking the mold of academic tradition was the first step on the road to new and productive adventures in teaching and learning at IUPUI.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Fried, J. (1999). Two Steps to Creative Campus Collaboration, AAHE Bulletin 51,7: 10-12.

Evenbeck, S. and G. Williams (1998). Learning Communities: An Instructional Team Approach, Metropolitan Universities 9,1: 35-46.

The Importance of Student Mentors in First-Year Seminars

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with the assistance of Kelly Carter and Denise Duzan

Abstract: Most universities offer first year seminars to orient students to academic life, typically managed by faculty members and/or academic advisors. At some universities, however, these seminars also include a student (or "peer") mentor. The purpose of this essay is to explore the likely strengths and weaknesses of this innovation, by analyzing the results of a close study of the student mentor program at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI), involving information from staff, faculty, seminar participants, and student mentors themselves. Results are presented in the context of previous research on peer mentorship as a strategy for improving student persistence and academic success and are compared to experiences at other colleges and universities. Recommendations for involving students as mentors in first year success seminars are offered.

Introduction

The majority of American colleges and universities now offer first-year seminars to orient entering students to academic life. Such seminars have been found to contribute positively to the success of first-year college students, in terms of increased retention, persistence to degree completion, and level of academic performance (Barefoot, 1993; Cuseo, 1991; Fidler, 1991). When first-year seminars first became common, around 1990, no mention was made of involving student or peer mentors in the program (e.g., Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews & Smith, 1990). By 1993, however, the Center for the Freshman Year Experience at the University of South Carolina recommended the use of upper-level undergraduates as peer mentors in seminars designed to help orient students to college life (Barefoot & Gardner, 1993). One of the universities to do this extensively has been Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI).

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In 1999, a study was launched to examine student mentoring in first-year seminars at IUPUI. This study involved collecting and analyzing data from several sources: (1) surveys completed by student mentors, (2) surveys completed by faculty members associated with first-year seminars, (3) interviews with Learning Center administrators, (4) records kept by the Learning Center, which has supervised the program, (5) institutional statistics generated to assess the impact of student mentoring on students' academic success, and (6) surveys of other colleges and universities cited as involving student mentoring in first-year seminars.

The purpose of this essay is to explore the strengths and weaknesses of student mentoring as an important component in first-year seminars, by analyzing the results of this study of the IUPUI student mentoring program and considering these results in the context of educational theory, previous research and present practices at other institutions. The five major topics included in this analysis are (1) mentor recruitment and selection, (2) mentor role definition and workload, (3) training and support for student mentors and their faculty partners, (4) mentor supervision and evaluation, and (5) benefits of student mentoring for first-year students, student mentors and faculty partners. Recommendations are made for enhancing the operation of student mentoring programs and the benefits to be gained by involving students as mentors in first-year success seminars.

Peer Mentoring In First-Year Seminars

The use of student mentors as a strategy to enhance students' academic success in first-year seminars is a relative new development, but it is an idea that is receiving increasing attention in connection with the rise in number of first-year seminars designed to offer students a prolonged orientation to university culture and to the skills necessary for success. Freshman seminars tend to be student-focused, designed to introduce students to the skills and competencies they will need to be academically successful and to the university resources in place that will help them with specific problems; these seminars also introduce students to the norms and values associated with university life. There appears to be ample justification for inclusion of student (or peer) mentors in the team facilitating these seminars. Given the focus of freshman seminars, on easily transferable skills and knowledge, it seems plausible that peer mentors could serve an important and useful role in assisting faculty and staff who traditionally have facilitated these seminars.

A recent study involving 40 colleges and universities conducted by Suzanne Hamid at Lee University (2000) reveals the top reasons why colleges and universities want to involve students as mentors in first-year seminars. Important reasons include: (1) forging better connections with first year students, (2) providing first-year students with role models for success and (3) wanting to bridge the gap between students and teachers.

The actual prevalence of student mentors' involvement in first-year seminars is relatively unexplored. The 1997 Survey of First-Year Seminar Programs conducted by the Center for First-year Experience at the University of South Carolina discovered 85 institutions which said they used "upper-level undergraduate students as instructors in first-year seminars." The list of colleges and universities found by the Center for the First-Year Experience to include student mentors was undoubtedly incomplete, since IUPUI itself was not listed. When we conducted an e-mail survey of each of the 85 institutions on the Center's list, we had difficulty obtaining information on many programs. By the end of 1999, we discovered that 16 of these 85 institutions had discontinued their first-year seminars, leaving a smaller number of 69. Of these 69, only 24 agreed to supply us with information about their programs, with an additional 10 universities agreeing to give us a simple description of their program that mentioned using student mentors. Using the same list we did, Suzanne Hamid at Lee University obtained information from only 40 (Hamid, 1999). A 1998 publication on first-year seminars by the Center for First-Year Experience mentioned in passing the names of only 41 different four-year institutions which used student mentors (Barefoot et al., 1998). Pulling all these sources together, it appears that the number of universities using student mentors in first-year seminars might be close to 40. Since the Center for the First-Year Experience estimates that about 800 colleges and universities are involved with offering first-year seminars, this suggests that only a small proportion of institutions using first-year seminars - about 1 in 20 -seem involved in using student mentors.

Programs for First-Year Students at IUPUI

In response to a concern for the low retention of undergraduates, IUPUI has developed a comprehensive set of programs and services designed to help entering students succeed at IUPUI, now administered by a campus unit called University College. IUPUI has also created a large network of academic mentoring services (i.e., "supplemental instruction") and first-year seminars, both employing student mentors.

Freshman seminars were first offered at IUPUI during Fall 1995. By the second time seminars were taught, academic advisors were assigned to each faculty member to help them in orienting students to college life. By the third semester (Fall 1996), the idea of including student mentors was introduced. The student mentor was seen as "a buffer between students and faculty," and as "an exemplar - a physical embodiment of student success that a first-year student can use as a model for his or her own success" (IUPUI Self Study Committee, 1999:18). Responsibility for these mentors was given to the Learning Center, which already supervised student mentors involved academic mentoring.

Despite the goal of placing a student mentor in each seminar, the percentage of seminars involving student mentors has in general declined as the number of seminars being offered has increased. (See Table 1.) In Fall 1996, 87% of seminars involved student mentors, by Fall 1999 only 62% did.

Table 1. Involvement of Student Mentors in First-Year Seminars at IUPUI
Fall 1996 through Fall 1999*

Semester	Number of seminars		% with student mentors
	Without mentors	With mentors	
Fall 1996	2	13	87%
Spring 1997	3	10	77%
Fall 1997	6	31	84%
Spring 1998	13	22	63%
Fall 1998	26	45	64%
Spring 1999	27	11	29%
Fall 1999	41	60	59%
TOTALS	118	192	62%

*This list may exclude some "learning communities" established alongside of first-year seminars sponsored by University College and specific schools which were not regarded as first-year seminars (e.g., critical thinking course offered by the School of Education for students with low reading skills).

METHODS INVOLVED IN THIS STUDY

To explore the benefits and problems associated with using student mentors in first-year seminars, University College initiated a study of its own program in 1999. The College recruited me for this task because I have previous experience teaching first-year seminars at IUPUI (with and without student mentors) and am formally affiliated with University College as well as with my "home" school, Liberal Arts. As a sociologist, I am keenly aware of the impact bias and selectivity can have on research results. Since my own experiences with student mentors have been overwhelmingly positive, at the outset I decided to gather information from as many different perspectives as possible to learn more about the student mentoring component of the first-year seminar.

Mentor and Faculty Surveys

To obtain information about the student mentoring program from the perspective of students and faculty who have been involved in it, two surveys were conducted. The first involved a survey of past and present student mentors. The survey asked students about area of concern, including recruitment, training, role definition, workload, and supervision. A list of 114 students who had been mentors in first-year seminars between Fall 1996 and Fall 1999 was developed. Students seemed reluctant to participate in our study, perhaps because they were very busy or perhaps because they were concerned about the confidentiality of their answers (even though we promised this). Only 18 students (16%) responded to the survey. Future surveys of student mentors should take place immediately after the semester they mentor is over, so that a higher response rate can be obtained.

To interview faculty about the same issues, a questionnaire was developed. The response rate for this survey was not much better than for the student survey, even when faculty were more accessible. A total of 23 faculty out of the 88 who have been involved in first-year seminars involving student mentors responded to the survey. This yields a response rate of only 26%. Some faculty members consented to in-person interviews which were conducted by me, while others were interviewed by me over the telephone or via e-mail. More elaborate answers were obtained through in- would presumably feel more comfortable talking to a student rather than a faculty interviewer.

Because of our low response rates, we cannot generalize our results to the entire group of individuals involved with first-year seminars at IUPUI, which was our original intention.

Learning Center Administration and Records

We wanted to learn as much about the mentoring program as possible via those individuals who have been in charge of administering the program, in the Learning Center at University College. The study thus began by conducting informal interviews in-person and via e-mail with University College administrators, the director of the learning center and senior supervisors connected to the program.

We hoped to learn as much as we could from records kept by the Learning Center. We obtained copies of student mentor manuals in use at different stages of program development. We hoped also to analyze other documents associated with the program, such as student applications (to see what type of students were recruited or were rejected), student mentors' written evaluations of the training they received at the outset, copies of reports student mentors submitted to their Learning Center supervisors, supervisors' evaluations of mentor performance, faculty evaluations of student mentor performance, and seminar students' evaluations of student mentors. Copies of all these forms were located, but it proved impossible to systematically locate and analyze any set of them.

Institutional Research

The fourth source of information on the IUPUI student mentoring program was the IUPUI Office of Information Management and Institutional Research. Researchers in this office were recruited to obtain some objective measures of the effectiveness of student mentoring in first-year-seminars by pulling the grades of students in first-year seminars and comparing outcomes for those in seminars which were student mentored compared to those which were not. These comparisons were made controlling for various potential determinants of academic success (e.g., high school rank in class), and they went smoothly once the list of mentored and non-mentored sections was corrected.

Survey of Other Institutions

We attempted to learn what we could about student mentoring at other institutions by contacting colleges and universities identified by the Center for the First-year Experience at the University of South Carolina. A student assistant contacted each institution by e-mail. (The questions used for this purpose are included in Appendix C.) Despite repeated e-mail contacts, we obtained information from only 24 programs (out of a potential list of 69 still offering first-year programs). This yielded a low 35% response rate. To supplement our knowledge about other universities, we obtained preliminary results of a similar study being conducted by Suzanne Hamid at Lee University, which we cite in this chapter.

Analytic Procedures

The findings obtained from the methods described above are considered under five specific topics: (1) mentor recruitment and selection, (2) mentor role definition and workload, (3) training and support for student mentors and faculty partners, (4) mentor supervision and evaluation and (5) benefits of student mentoring for first-year students, student mentors, and faculty. Since we were not able to obtain respectable response rate from our surveys or complete records from the Learning Center, we decided to treat the information we gathered from the several sources as qualitative data that can be used to gain useful insight into the specifics of the IUPUI mentoring program and to identify potential strengths and weaknesses. This discussion, when possible, is placed in the context of educational theory and research on student retention and academic success and in comparison to the experience with student mentoring at other institutions. In our conclusion, we make suggestions for program practice and evaluation, based on our qualitative analysis.

FINDINGS

In this section of the report, we will take up each of our major topics, looking at the IUPUI program in regard to strengths and weaknesses, followed by some recommendations. A successful student mentoring program needs to start with recruiting students likely to make good mentors, so this topic is covered first.

Mentor Recruitment and Selection

Who is in charge of recruitment of mentors?

The first time that student mentors were used in first-year seminars at IUPUI, faculty who taught those seminars played a major role in recruitment. They tended to choose students who had been successful in previous first-year seminars or students who were majoring in the faculty's discipline and were interested in careers in higher education. Today, the Learning Center in University College (UC) takes a major role in recruiting students, especially for the seminars offered through University College to conditionally admitted students or students who have not decided upon a major or yet admitted to the school of their choice. UC was also reported to be actively involved in recruitment of student mentors for some specific school-based or department-based programs. To a large extent, they rely on retaining past mentors and on following up on the recommendations of faculty members. As the practice of student mentoring has spread, however, some schools and departments have adopted a preference for taking on a more active role in recruiting student mentors who are majors in their school.

What are the criteria for selection for mentors?

To understand more fully what they are applying for, students interested in becoming Learning Center mentors are given a copy of the job description, an outline of a typical mentor week, and a list of the qualities that the Learning Center are looking in student mentors.

This list makes clear the selection criteria for student mentors: The Learning Center looks for good role models by looking for an individual with a "successful academic pattern and thorough understanding of the course material.... self-motivated, good sense of time management." The Learning Center wants mentors who are "caring, supportive...can empower others to take charge of their own goals and academic success....[with] excellent communication skills in the area of listening." Successful applicants should also "recognize and accept the diversity of others" and "seek appropriate counsel when necessary."

An application to be a student mentor includes questions about GPA, major, current employment, and work history; it also requires students to list two references, ideally from academia. Students are then asked to answer a list of essay questions, designed to further explore their qualifications and motivations for mentoring.

A senior supervisor verifies the objective information given on the student application. Students who appear to be good candidates according to the above criteria are invited for an interview, where their communication and social skills can be scrutinized. To finalize the arrangements, a second interview is conducted before a student is approved for the job.

What are the strengths of IUPUI's recruitment and selection processes?

IUPUI's first-year seminar program has several strengths in the area of recruitment and selection. The system appears to have produced students who have worked out well as mentors. As will be reported below, faculty and seminar students alike are usually quite satisfied with student mentors' contribution to first-year seminars. In developing the list of students who had participated as mentors, it was noticeable that in only a very few cases had students been hired as mentors and then failed to complete the semester assignment.

Retention of student mentors also appears as a strength at IUPUI. Looking at the group of 80 student mentors who had started their jobs as mentors before Fall 1999, one-third (26) had been mentors for at least two semesters.

One reason for IUPUI's successful retention rate may be that University College tries to recruit mentors as early as the sophomore year. Educational researchers tend to emphasize that mentors should be more advanced students, that is, juniors and seniors, because at this point students have a better perspective on academic success and failure and have proved that they are serious about school. However's Hamid's (2000) study of other colleges and universities offering first-year seminars with student mentors found that at the 40 colleges studied, 40% of mentors were only sophomores. One IUPUI mentor defended using sophomore students by saying "this keeps the mentor in touch with the students, because they can say that 'I was in your position last semester.'"

The selection criteria used by University College are somewhat in line with the qualities that educational researchers, IUPUI faculty and student mentors themselves believe should be qualifications for becoming a mentor. They also tend to coincide with selection criteria used at other institutions. One major criterion relates to students' interest in helping other students. Applicants for mentoring positions should have the type of personality that would enable them to be able to provide social support for students in first-year seminars. Up front, the Learning Center announces that they want to choose students for mentoring who are "caring, supportive...can empower others to take charge of their own goals and academic success....[with]

excellent communication skills in the area of listening." Ideal mentor traits identified by student mentors and faculty interviewed for the study include being approachable, compassionate, upbeat , friendly, outgoing and a good listener. Applicants for mentoring positions should have a record of concern for others as well as a background in being able to related to people with different backgrounds than their own. Good communication skills and being a good listener were reported to be common qualifications for mentors at other institutions (Hamid, 2000).

Because student mentors take their place on a team of professionals dedicated to promoting student academic success, it is important that a mentoring applicant at IUPUI be considered in terms of their past experience with being a "team player." The Learning Center includes this aspect explicitly in the selection process.

Another set of desirable qualifications for student mentors center around the need for the mentor to be a model and advocate of integration into the academic community. One student mentor summarized this succinctly by saying "The most important qualification may sound simple but it is really about wanting to be here." Applicant should somehow be able to demonstrate their commitment to higher education and possibly IUPUI, e.g., through participating in student activities and campus programs. At IUPUI, applicants for student mentor positions complete essays and interviews which help to gauge their commitment to college. According to Hamid (2000), "involvement on campus" and "enthusiasm for the institution" are important selection criteria at other universities recruiting student mentors for first-year seminars.

What are the weaknesses of IUPUI's recruitment and selection processes?

The most obvious weakness of the system at IUPUI is the insufficient number of students who are recruited to become mentors. By Fall 1999, one-third of first-year seminars did not have a student mentor. Recruitment of student mentors is not generally reported to be a problem at other universities (Hamid, 2000).

IUPUI's problems with recruiting sufficient numbers of mentors seem related to the rapid growth of first-year seminars at IUPUI. As the number of seminars has grown, the percentage of seminars which include student mentors has decreased (see Table 1). Learning Center administrators admitted that recruitment was a problem.

Another reason for the lag in recruitment appears to be a lack of involvement on the part of faculty. UC frequently asks faculty to recommend students to become mentors. Learning Center administrators complained that faculty did not give enough input. In turn, some faculty complained in their interviews that their recommendations were often not acted upon, and this has led them to stop recommending students to the Learning Center. This seems to be partly related to a difference in opinion between UC and faculty in terms of selection criteria, but also seems to be related to breakdowns in communication and information transmission.

When asked about their concerns with student mentoring selection, several faculty expressed dissatisfaction with the timing of the appointment of student mentors. Last minute juggling of course offerings contributed to a tendency to hire student mentors at the last minute. In at least one case, the student mentor and faculty partner met for the first time on the first day of class. This pattern had important implications for training and defining of the mentoring role, as is discussed below.

Another weakness of IUPUI's system for recruitment of mentors might be its lack of emphasis on the academic credentials of student mentors. Educational researchers suggest that mentors should be role models for other students, and to do this they should be academically successful, demonstrating high academic achievement and the acquisition of skills necessary for educational success (e.g., library and computer skills). As one IUPUI student mentor said, "I think the student mentor should be a good student and a role model to others." Most universities in Hamid's study of 40 student mentor programs required that mentors have a 3.0 (B) average or above (Hamid, 2000). Hamid's own university (Lee) requires an even higher GPA (3.5). In 1999-2000, applicants for IUPUI mentoring positions needed to have only a 2.5 grade point average (GPA) out of a possible 4.0. (Mentors in a few programs, e.g., Tourism, were required to have a 3.0.) At IUPUI, University College prefers to hire students as mentors who have received an A in their first-year seminars (a practice that exists elsewhere (e.g., Hamilton College). But this requirement is frequently waived because some applicants were not required to take first-year seminars when they first came to IUPUI.

IUPUI's required GPA for student mentors might be held at a modest level because University College has perceived that there is not consensus among IUPUI faculty that student mentors must have demonstrated high levels of academic achievement, as reflected in having a high GPA. In our interviews, faculty seemed less concerned about GPA than they were about other desirable attributes for student mentors. As one faculty member said, "the mentor's grades are not important. Students can bring other strengths to the position."

How can mentor recruitment and selection of processes be strengthened?

Several strategies for improving recruitment can be deduced from comments made by student mentors and from the experiences at other universities.

One strategy is to provide better remuneration for mentoring services. Mentors generally felt that the pay was decent (the pay level for Fall 1999 had been raised to $8 an hour), but two mentioned that outside jobs can offer students more benefits and tuition breaks. Hamid's study and our own survey of other institutions found that hourly pay for mentoring was common, but was often less than what was offered at IUPUI (averaging $6 an hour). Other universities supplement hourly wages with economic incentives that seem to matter to students. Examples of these incentives included state scholarships, semester stipends, free "room and board," a "free" class, free admission to campus events, free textbooks, cards which could be used to purchase meals on campus, waivers for student technology fees, bookstore credits and gift certificates.

Another strategy to improve recruitment of students for mentoring programs involves emphasizing the prestige associated with promoting the experience. At Arizona State, Central Missouri State and Portland State, being a mentor is a "Badge of Honor," "a plum assignment for students to achieve." According to a spokesperson from Milligan, "We give little monetary remuneration, yet we always have an abundance of applicants. It seems to be a prestigious position." At some universities, mentors are visible through distinctive t-shirts; mentors' work is featured in campus publications; recognition ceremonies and banquets are common. At IUPUI, University College administrators have considered trying to arrange special parking privileges for student mentors, both as a benefit and as a symbol of their importance to the campus. Recognition ceremony for mentors have occurred but are not well-publicized. However, it seems likely that there are limits to raising the prestige of student mentoring at IUPUI as long as the academic qualifications for mentors remains relatively low.

Some IUPUI student mentors felt the program was not sufficiently well-advertised. One student thought more flyers about the program could be posted around campus, mentioning that the position involved pay. Another student said schools should publicize it more in their offices and newsletters - " this gives the Learning Center more validity in the eyes of the students." Another suggestion was to have "more visible activities involving mentors." The visibility of the program was also a concern for Learning Center administrators. Other universities have made their programs more visible to potential recruits by sending letters to honor students, encouraging articles in the school newspaper, and making contact with campus leaders. These activities also reinforce the idea that student mentoring is something with status on campus.

Incentives to participate in the mentoring program need not focus on what student mentors have personally to gain from participation. According to a representative from Hamilton College (Clinton, New York), student mentors' "principal incentive has been the opportunity to participate in something they find rewarding." The motto of the IUPUI mentoring program is "students helping students" and this goal is clearly very appealing to many students who become mentors. One mentor said "I like working with people and wanted to try an on-campus job that would allow me to interact with the students." Another said that the aspect of the program which appealed to them from the beginning was "the opportunity to connect more closely with other students and assist them in remaining in school for their first year." A third said, "I liked the idea that I could help students in adapting to IUPUI and be there for them if they had any questions. When I first came here, I didn't really know what was going on."

Another approach for attracting students to the program is to emphasize how it could serve as important work experience. Two students saw from the beginning that mentoring would be good work experience. One of these was an education major; UC staff have considered more aggressively recruiting education majors into the program because of the obvious link between program goals and students' career goals. Internal motivations for taking on the mentoring job might be highlighted more in advertising for student mentors. As one mentor said, "I recommend that University College spell out to candidates just how becoming a mentor will benefit them personally and/or complement their academic and vocation-related goals."

The last type of incentive relates to the needs for social contact of students, especially those at an urban commuter campus like IUPUI. The mentoring program provides students with opportunities to participate in a number of campus and social activities, especially since the program is based in the same building as student activities. As a physical location for the activities of student mentors, the Learning Center already is appreciated on campus as a friendly, supportive place on campus where students can interact on academic and nonacademic subjects.

MENTOR ROLE DEFINITION AND WORKLOAD

How is the student mentor role defined and who does the defining?

Defining the roles and responsibilities of student mentors in first-year seminars at IUPUI has been a responsibility that has been shared by the Learning Center and instructional teams.

The Learning Center makes its expectations for student mentors clear, in application documents, program manuals and through training programs. "Essential' components of the mentoring role from the perspective of the Learning Center include class attendance, class preparation, outside student contact and attendance at instructional team meetings. Student mentors are also expected to engage in "on-going training," which involves weekly staff meetings, meetings with a small group of mentors, and completing a reflective journal. These basic responsibilities are common to many other universities' student mentoring programs.

While the Learning Center provides very specific guidance in regard to how exactly student mentors should participate in on-going training, directives in regard to the "mentoring" aspect of the student mentor's role are deliberately left more general. According to the 1998 program manual, it is expected that the role of the student mentor will vary across seminars, depending on the student's previous experience on instructional teams and their basic personalities (Learning Center, 1998, p. 105). One faculty member reported that "The mentor handbook was very helpful. It gave me permission to treat my mentor as an individual, let it happen, rather than a formula."

The program manual does provide some ideas for how the mentor role can be defined within the instructional team. It makes very clear that the "normal" role for a student mentor is to be "an empowering contact for students." Student mentors are encouraged to make "informal" contacts with students in first-year seminars before, after and outside class. The program manual states: "Engaging students in conversation may be the only way that problems can be discerned; thus, [mentors'] talking to students is crucial to providing [students] with the support and resources they need to succeed" (Learning Center, 1998, p. 105). One IUPUI student mentor said, "the professors are important but many new students are either afraid to talk with professors or feel better talking wit a peer. In other words, the mentor should be a 'bridge' between the professor and students." The goal that student mentors serve as a liaison between first-year students and faculty was echoed in a comment made by a faculty member: "At the outset, I asked them to keep eyes and ears open, try to be connected with the students. I tell them they can pick up things I can't, forge links I cannot."

Each week, according to the Learning Center, the student mentor "should be prepared to discuss his or her experiences and perspective relating to that week's topic" (p. 107). In class, student mentors should also model appropriate student behaviors, including arriving early, being attentive and taking notes.

A more optional part of the "normal" role for student mentors, according to the program manual, involves participating in class presentations. The manual mentions that student mentors in their role of "expert student" might "make presentations to the class about a particular area of expertise or skill." This can involve gathering information from easily accessible sources, including the assigned textbook and materials at the Learning Center (which houses a resource binder). These presentations are encouraged to be offered in a format that facilitates collaborative learning (e.g., small group discussions and projects), "to maximize student involvement in their own learning" (The Learning Center, 1998, p. 108).

Interviews with faculty and student mentors indicated that at IUPUI, student mentors' involvement in planning the seminar beforehand and in defining their specific responsibilities varied considerably. In interviews, some faculty mentioned trying to design the role of student mentor around the interests and strengths of the student. This is a philosophy shared by other colleges and universities we studied. For example, at Portland State, "There is not one "correct" way for a mentor to work. Faculty and mentors work together to create strategies that incorporate their personalities and strengths in order to contribute to their students' success....[M]entors often bring their unique talents and experiences into the classroom and the mentor sessions" (Portland State University Self Study Committee, 1999, p. 9).

In several instructional teams, IUPUI faculty members reported that student mentors had played a very active role in decision-making regarding course requirements and activities, even to the point of "having an equal voice."

What are the strengths involved in IUPUI's way of defining the mentoring role?

The student mentor role as defined by University College program materials fits in well with what educational research suggests would help first-year students succeed. Mentors serve as role models of academic success and provide social support. They are often involved in making class presentations that present strategies students can use to get ahead. There is also evidence that student mentors do a good job of linking students with needed campus resources. Two-thirds of student mentors who completed the University College program evaluation for spring 1999 said that they referred students to the resource center for tutorial information and supplemental instruction.

The IUPUI model calls for the faculty member and the student mentor to both play important roles in the first-year seminar, but not the same exact role. This seems very appropriate, given the strengths that each brings to the situation. University College stresses that mentors should be models of "expert students," who help other students succeed by sharing strategies that they and others have used to do well in school. There are, however, some universities which seem to advocate that student mentors have the same role as faculty.

Most of the IUPUI faculty we contacted are comfortable with different instructional team members playing different roles. There are some faculty, however, who think student mentors should play more of a traditional teaching role in the classroom, especially in regard to grading. In an interview, one faculty member confided, "Under my guidance, I think [mentors] could teach small classes and be able to grade some papers." Another said, "I think it would help mentors to grow and develop if they were involved in grading, but I was told this was not allowed." One difference between IUPUI's program and some others is that student mentors in first-year seminars are instructed by the Learning Center that they are not to be involved in grading (which Hamid, 2000, reports happens at other universities).

In general, it seems likely that student mentors can provide more confidential assistance and social support if they are not involved in evaluating student performance. As one faculty member said in an interview, "I toyed with the idea of having the student member actively teach, but this would make the students associate him more closely with the traditional instructor. So I have decided against it." The philosophy of mentoring explicitly rules out mentors evaluating protégés. This means mentors should not be involved in grading, and might even not call absentees, if the purpose is for evaluation. All concerned need to be clear that only the faculty member has the (onerous) duty of evaluating student performance, which frees up other team members to play other important roles to help students.

Another apparent strength of the IUPUI program is that IUPUI student mentors in first-year seminars are members of a large instructional team, which includes not only a student mentor and a faculty member, but also an academic advisor, librarian and sometimes other staff members. At most universities we learned about, the instructional team is much smaller. The larger size of the instructional team can make a big difference in the definition of the student mentor's role. At IUPUI, for example, where a librarian is on just about every team, students are less involved in enhancing students' library skills than they are at some other institutions where the team is composed of only a faculty member and a student mentor. Academic advisors can answer a lot of first-year student questions about course requirements, dropping courses, and registration.

What are the weaknesses involved in IUPUI's way of defining the mentoring role?

University College lays out an outline for the student mentor, and instructional teams are expected to fill in the details. A major problem in regard to the role definition of student mentors at IUPUI is that some faculty are clueless in terms of what to expect from student mentors (and probably also what to expect from first-year seminars). Understanding increases the longer faculty are involved in seminars, but interviews revealed that even some veterans of first-year seminar know little about the philosophy of student mentoring at IUPUI.

Several faculty members admitted their ignorance. Comments were made like these: "Figuring out what the mentor was supposed to do was hard." "We were all feeling our way."

There was a tendency to blame University College for not providing more information: "It was not made clear to me by University College what the role of a student mentor should be." "I wasn't aware of all the structure of the mentor program...We have played the whole semester by ear . . . . It would take the load off me if I knew what the mentor can do." Even student mentors tended to hold University College accountable for faculty's inability to work with mentors. One said in an interview, "The Learning Center should help professors to better understand/prepare prior to working in a learning community with a mentor."

Another weakness in regard to the mentor's role in the program is that not all faculty are really interested in student mentors' playing an active role. One student mentor complained that her professor "didn't include me in anything." Another mentor said, "The mentor should be more involved with the planning of the course. I was presented with the instructor's syllabus, and never given an opportunity to help. I didn't feel as though I was really being given the opportunity to be a part of the instructional team." Interviews with faculty revealed that student presentation topics were sometimes dictated by faculty. Sometimes the presentation topics were ones student mentors had been warned by University College training to avoid, because they concerned subjects that more pertinently connected to faculty vs. student expertise. In some other cases, the faculty member remained clearly in charge of every class session, with the faculty member stating that the student mentor's role was just to offer "assistance." Some faculty are reluctant to share responsibility for the seminar with student mentors. One admitted, "I need more time to see what the mentor can or could do. At the present time, I think it is better for most roles to be played by the faculty member as I believe that faculty contact is what the students in a learning community need." There were cases of faculty complaints about student mentors' lack of interest in being involved in the seminar, but these were few.

From the perspective of faculty in several schools at IUPUI, and from the perspective of about one-fourth of student mentors (according to an evaluation conducted by University College n Spring 1999), an important weakness concerning the role definition of student mentors has been University College's requirement that all student mentors complete certain types of paperwork. Everyone understands that students need to report on their hours in order to be paid; they also need to read important messages from Learning Center staff. But in the past, students did both by filling out physical time sheet and by signing off in a "communication book" at the Learning Center. One student mentor suggested that both of these activities could be handled electronically, to save everyone time.

There has been even more criticism involving another type of what was also called "paperwork" - for example, mentors' keeping weekly "contact logs" that document meetings with first-year students. From the perspective of some faculty and some student mentors, the contact logs are time-consuming and may even possibly involve a violation of student privacy (since names and student identification numbers are supposed to be listed). The requirement of a journal is also questioned by some students and academic units. These journals require mentors' to describe and reflect on their mentoring activities that week. From the perspective of University College, these logs and journals are essential methods for documenting that the student mentor has put out effort that coincides with the hours they claimed on time cards. Supervisors rely particularly on the journals to note mentor strengths and identify potential problems.

The journal entries have a particular format to help student mentors think about their experiences. But the list of questions is long. Few faculty are expected to reflect this much and this often (weekly) on their teaching.

From an academic point-of-view, reflective journals are important learning tools often used in settings where students are involved in experiential learning (e.g., internships); they can help students learn how they have developed and changed as a result of being a mentor. The further removed faculty and students are from Liberal Arts, the more journals tend to be considered "time-consuming," "unnecessary," "worthless" "touchy-feely" tasks, that take away from mentors' time to work directly with first-year students.

Another controversial issue involving University College requirements for student mentors has been their mandatory attendance at Friday meetings, which alternate between being one and two hours in length. From the perspective of University College, these meetings are an important form of on-going mentor training. From the perspective of some IUPUI students, who typically have no classes on Fridays, meetings are a pain to attend because they occasion a special trip to campus and interfere with students using the day to catch up on schoolwork or work at another job.

Some schools said it was difficult enough to recruit student mentors, without requiring them to involve themselves in activities that drew them away from the department offering the seminar. In response to these concerns, University College has negotiated new and different rules for paperwork and meeting attendance with several schools and with specific mentors even in University College.

The last apparent weakness with the student mentor role concerns the failure of many first-year seminar students to take advantage of student mentors' offer of assistance and support. This is most visible when student mentors try to hold an official "office hour," which in the past was a requirement of the Learning Center. Students would seldom attend official office hours, and the Learning Center agreed to let office hours be flexibly determined. Mentors find they have more success contacting students before and after class.

How can the definition of the mentor role be strengthened?

It is essential that student mentor appointments be made earlier so that instructional teams can meet in advance of the first day of class to negotiate a syllabus and agree on roles and responsibilities of all members.

Faculty members need considerably more training on first-year seminars and especially the student mentor component of the program. This training needs to take place before the semester begins, and should also be on-going through the semester.

An attempt to give faculty essential information about student mentors in a compact format was made during Fall 1999, by developing and sending out a small booklet. While a beginning, this booklet cannot substitute for more intensive training of faculty in regard to the purpose of first year seminars, the philosophy of student mentoring, how best to form collaborative partnerships with student mentors, and the range of possibilities for student mentor involvement in first-year seminars.

The relevance of University College requirements regarding written documentation for accountability and meetings for on-going training needs to be more carefully considered.

One aspect of the student mentor role that could be profitably strengthened relates to helping first-year students become socially integrated into the university environment. Student mentors could be more active in helping students make contact with campus groups and organizations that appeal to their personal, academic or career interests. The student mentor cold also take a leading role in helping the instructional team develop a service learning component to the first-year seminar. Research indicates that feeling connected is an important motivation for staying in school.

In response to the reported difficulty some student mentors have in getting first-year seminar students to meet with them, it is recommended that students in the first year seminar be better informed about the important role the student mentor can play.

TRAINING OF STUDENT MENTORS AND FACULTY

What type of training do student mentors receive?

Training of student mentors at IUPUI is multi-faceted. It involves a three-day training program, weekly meetings, regular contacts with supervisors, and guidance from faculty.

Students attend a three-day training program immediately before the semester, delivered by Learning Center administrators and students who are supervisors in the program. The importance of student mentors in first-year seminars is emphasized; they are told mentors "provide a student perspective," "provide ideas, suggestions, insights," and "provide balance" to the instructional team of the seminars. Students learn more about the role they should play in the seminar. Students are also cautioned about the roles they should not play; they are not to become teaching assistants, grade, or be perceived as experts.

During training, students are given an introduction to skills they might need as mentors, including interpersonal communication, classroom presentation and conflict management. Ethical issues covered include sexual harassment and respect for diversity. Students are introduced to various academic procedures and policies (e.g., how to withdraw from a class).

This three-day training is followed up by mandatory weekly meetings on Fridays, where students discuss problems and receive further training to enhance their performance as mentors. Each mentor is assigned to a junior supervisor, and they must keep in regular contact with the supervisor, who can provide them with additional guidance as the semester unfolds. Mentors are also given a 134-page "learning strategies" manual, which is designed to give them ideas on how to help students succeed academically.

When asked what type of training they wanted student mentors to receive, IUPUI faculty tended to emphasize the importance of "on the job" training for mentors, over the idea of an extended orientation prior to the semester. This meant that mentors were involved with the instructional team in planning the syllabus and class activities and through this they learned about the role they should play. Some faculty emphasized that they allowed the mentor's own interests and strengths to dictate the direction in which training would proceed, so they did not believe that any kind of standardized training was really desirable.

Although several faculty stated preferences for training their own mentors, faculty preferences for how often they should meet with their student mentors during the semester varied dramatically, from a few times a semester to every time the class meets. On average, it didn't seem that faculty had the time or were willing to spend very much time out of class engaged in on-going training of student mentors.

What are the strengths involved in IUPUI's way of training students and faculty for mentoring?

The topics covered in the three-day orientation offered by the Learning Center for new and returning student mentors seem to include most if not all those mentioned by other universities as part of their own training programs. Indeed, the list of subjects covered was much longer than the lists mentioned by other universities.

Student mentors complete evaluation of the three-day training program and these evaluations report on several worthwhile aspects. These include becoming better informed about the mentor role, how to complete paperwork, and how to help students succeed academically.

Several mention learning more about campus resources and that they enjoyed team-building exercises; as one student said training days tend "to instill spirit, something lacking on this campus."

What are the weaknesses involved in IUPUI's way of training students and faculty for mentoring?

One weakness in the current training program offered to student mentors by the Learning Center might be its timing. Most other universities for which we have information begin training of student mentors the semester before they become mentors, not just a week before, as IUPUI does.

Another weakness in IUPUI's mentor training program is the lack of involvement of faculty.

Faculty's lack of involvement in mentor training offered by University College probably contributes to faculty's lack of knowledge about student mentoring. Faculty members' and schools' lack of knowledge about the Learning Center's training (and supervisory) procedures seems to have led to an underappreciation of the services provided by the Center.

Student mentors' evaluation of the three-day training yielded some complaints. some students felt that the training period was too long, claimed that pace of the training was too slow, with too many breaks, and slow-starting sessions.

How can training of students and faculty for mentoring be strengthened?

Faculty need to become better informed about student mentoring and the training their mentors receive.

The wide scope of training offered by University College seems unlikely to be matched by individual professors (or perhaps even by academic units). Faculty do not yet have sufficient insight into the philosophy of student mentoring or how best to facilitate a strong role for the mentor in the seminar. Future training of student mentors and faculty could be handled in a different way, so that University College and academic units had a hand in the training. Once well-trained, faculty members can take on a more supportive role in orienting the particular mentor they work with.

Student mentor training needs to begin as early as possible, so that students can have time to learn the mentoring role and develop some of the skills they will need to become successful mentors.

To supplement this type of training (or even in place of it), a new organization for the three-day training could be piloted. In response to faculty concerns about the length of mentor orientation, and mentors' own doubts that the time is well utilized, one suggestion might be to offer a one-day "basic training" orientation for new mentors, which acquaints them with the philosophy of first-year seminars, the importance of the student mentor component of first-year seminars, the broad outline of the "normal" student mentor role, the structure and function of University College in general and the Learning Center in particular, requirements for accountability, and campus resources for first-year students.

Ideally, there would be a separate (first) day of training for new faculty associated with first-year seminars on many of the same topics.

While most universities offer continued training to their student mentors, IUPUI seems unique in requiring that mentors attend Friday staff meetings. At Portland State, student mentors are required to obtain a specific number of hours of additional training during the semester they mentor, but they are given several options on how this requirement can be fulfilled, which includes but is not limited to participation in a weekly staff meeting. Student comments suggest that new mentors have more need than veteran mentors for on-going training and the support getting together weekly provides . Faculty in first-year seminars would also benefit from similar on-going training and support, especially those involved in seminars for the first time.

MENTOR SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION

How are student mentors supervised and evaluated?

Student mentors in first-year seminars at IUPUI are under the direct supervision of a junior (student) supervisor in the Learning Center of University College as well as the supervision of the faculty member with whom they work.

The administrative structure of the Learning Center has involved four levels of supervision. Student mentors are watched most closely by junior supervisors, who tend to be upper-level students who have been successful mentors themselves. Junior supervisors report to senior supervisors, and senior supervisors report to the Learning Communities' Program Coordinator. The coordinator reports to the director of the Learning Center, who oversees all other types of mentoring programs and the resource center operated by University College.

Most faculty we interviewed felt only loosely connected to supervision of student mentors. When asked who supervised their mentors, most vaguely referred to University College; few knew specifically what reporting lines and supervisory contacts were involved. Some faculty members, however, did not know what system of supervision was in place.

Faculty are not very interested in direct supervision of mentors they work with. After noting UC's role in supervision, one faculty member said, "I can't imagine this changing. I don't want to evaluate her hours and monitor her work." Faculty not only did not seem to want to bother with the details of hours monitoring. They tended to regard student mentors as fellow professionals who, as one faculty member said, "don't really need supervision to do their jobs well."

Another form for evaluating the student mentors involves the students in first-year seminars. They are asked to evaluate the student mentor at the end of the semester. The practice of having the mentor evaluated by seminar students is common at other universities as well (Hamid, 2000). Students are asked to evaluate their student mentor on several dimensions; these include mentors' being approachable, reliable, supportive, understanding, accessible, discrete, considerate, patient, knowledgeable and fair. The vast majority of students whose evaluation of their mentors could be discovered in UC files rated their mentors quite favorably. Typically 75-100% gave mentors the highest ratings on all the criteria listed. Open-ended comments support this high evaluation (and are included in benefits of mentoring below).

How can mentor supervision and evaluation strategies be strengthened?

There could be a better collaboration between Learning Center supervisors and instructional teams, to monitor the performance and encourage the development of student mentors. Forms used for evaluation need to take into account the special situation of student mentors in first-year seminars and not include criteria that relate to other types of student mentoring in the Learning Center (e.g., academic mentoring for supplemental instruction). Since student mentors' work involves outside contact with students outside class, it is important that the quality of these contacts be assessed; for example, through a midterm evaluation administered to first-year students could be added to the present practice of doing asking students to evaluate mentors at the end of the semester. Faculty engagement in the supervision process needs to be strengthened. Perhaps short phone interviews could be undertaken by junior supervisors to interview faculty about student mentor progress at least by mid-semester.

BENEFITS OF STUDENT MENTORING

What are the benefits of student mentoring for first-year students?

Hamid's study of 40 student mentoring programs found that having a student mentored improved student retention; mentors were also highly rated by students.

To obtain an objective measure of the impact of student mentor on first-year success, at IUPUI, the Office of Information Management and Institutional Research was recruited to examine seminar grades, DFW rates, and semester grade point averages for students who had student-mentored first-year seminars during Fall 1999 compared to students whose first-year seminars did not include a student mentor. The results showed small but promising positive benefits of student mentoring for student outcomes.

We looked only at seminars offered by University College and the School of Business, since these were the only units which involved a significant number of students (948 and 547 respectively). In the analysis, all significant predictors of retention (e.g., high school rank, etc.), were included as control variables, in case there was a pattern whereby better prepared students tended to land in mentored or nonmentored seminars. Mentoring was found to have a positive but not significant effect on grades in first-year seminars. With a mentor, students' average grade in UC first-year seminars was 2.81 (B-), without a mentor it was 2.34 (C+). With a mentor, students' average grade in Business first-year seminars was 3.23 (almost B+); without a mentor it was 2.73 (B-).

Table 2.
Students' Average Grades in First-Year Seminars -
Comparing Mentored and Nonmentored Sections

	Fall 1997		Spring 1998		Fall 1998		Spring 1999		Fall 1999	
	M*	NM**	M	NM	M	NM	M	NM	M	NM
All seminars	2.57	2.43	2.43	2.52	2.79	2.86	2.23	2.58	2.85	2.69
University College only	2.52	NA	2.35	2.64	2.55	2.30	2.11	2.16	2.73	2.46
School of Business only	NA	NA	2.74	2.72	3.05	2.95	NA	2.85	3.24	3.06

*Mean under "M" refers to average grade of students in sections with a student mentor.
** Mean under "NM" refers to average grade of students in sections without a student mentor.
NA = not applicable; no students fell into this category

A similar analysis was conducted to examine the impact of student mentoring for first-semester GPA for students in first-year smeinars in Fall 1999. Controlling for all significant predictors of GPA, we found the average GPA of students who had mentors in UC first-year seminars was higher (2.24) than students without a mentor (2.17), but again the difference was not sufficiently large to be considered statistically significant. In the School of Business, students in mentored sections had an average 2.39 GPA for their first semester, which the same as the average GPA of students in nonmentored sections.

Faculty tended to highly rate the benefits of student mentoring for students in first-year seminars. Benefits tended to fall in specific categories. One category involved the benefit of having a role model. Comments from faculty in this regard included: "a very positive influence in the class. Nice role model." Student mentors helped first-year students feel connected: "It provides students an opportunity to make a connection with others that otherwise may have not been there." Student mentored provided direct assistance, ""It helped students with a lot of extra-academic concerns, and helped students to navigate the campus." "She helps them figure out what they can do to do better." Mentors also provide social support: "Mentors help students reflect on their educational goals and values. "

What are the benefits of mentoring for student mentors?

As discussed earlier in this chapter, mentoring tends to benefit not only those who are mentored but also those who are mentored.

Faculty who were interviewed mentioned several benefits of mentoring for mentors. Comments included the importance of mentoring for reinforcing mentors' academic achievement: "It affirms their sense of being good students" and "It helps mentors become even more aware of what it takes to be academically successful." Student mentors were reported to experience gains organization and communication skills, which would help them out in their other classes and in future careers.

Mentoring also improves student confidence and self-esteem; one faculty summarized this with the statement, "When you mentor, you grow." One mentor reported that his mentor has gotten "a great deal more confident in her abilities." Another said, "Mentors gain a sense of accomplishment and achievement, helping others and belonging." One faculty member stated, "Student mentoring builds confidence, leadership, looks good on a resume. They learn people skills, discernment skills. I wish I had such an opportunity when I was in college!" Still another reported, "I believe the student mentor is having a positive experience that will serve to reinforce a feeling of personal worth and value to the community."

What are the benefits of mentoring for faculty partners ?

Faculty also report themselves to benefit from working with student mentors. For some faculty, working with mentors allows them to get to know a different kind of student than they are accustomed to meeting in their regular courses. One faculty said, "I enjoyed getting to know an upper-level student - I don't teach many of them, so it exposed another side of campus to me." Another faculty referred to a group of student mentors she had worked with by saying, "I really do enjoy them. Really young and different, nice."

While one faculty member expressed concern that the presence of student mentors might discourage first-year students from approaching faculty, there seemed to be evidence for the opposite. Faculty reported that mentors encouraged students to meet with faculty about their concerns, and modelled how a student can have a good working relationship with a faculty member.

Faculty suggested that mentors can improve the delivery of first year seminars. One said, "Mentors give me good guidance." Mentors "resolve potential points of tension in the class," "notice trouble sooner." Another reported, "I enjoy working with the mentor and I appreciate the views that he adds to class discussion." "It is good to hear new ideas for the class," said another faculty member. "She has good ideas in planning," related another.

Faculty also appreciate how student mentors help to share the workload: " I have been able to delegate followup, they have located resources." "It provides one more person to help out. I need this support!" " She makes me look good."

CONCLUSION

First-year seminars are becoming more widely used as a strategy to enhance college students' retention and academic success. At several universities, these seminars are facilitated by an instructional team that includes an undergraduate student as a peer mentor. IUPUI is one of the universities that has engaged student mentors in first year seminars, starting in Fall 1996.

Research indicates that to be successful, first-year students need to have good role models, psychological and social support, opportunities to feel they belong on campus, and concrete advice and guidance (including knowledge of campus resources). Mentoring can help first-year students realize these prerequisites for college success. Faculty members in charge of first-year seminars ideally provide mentoring services; they are models of the academic life, they can encourage students to do their best work, they can suggest ways students can become linked up with the campus, they can offer the "inside scoop" on what professors expect of students in the classroom. Students do benefit from close contact with faculty in their first year. At IUPUI, the mentoring aspect of the faculty role in first-year seminars is strongly emphasized; indeed, the job is titled "faculty mentor."

But there are formidable limits to the amount of mentoring faculty can reasonably provide. Most first-year seminars (including those at IUPUI) are taken for an academic grade and faculty must provide that grade. Evaluation can interfere with key elements of the mentoring role (e.g., providing psychological and social support). Faculty aspire to be readily accessible to their students, but in reality they are occupied with a host of responsibilities related to teaching other courses, conducting research projects, writing articles and books, and performing service to the university, their profession or the community. New students can be shy about "interrupting" faculty from their other work; faculty can be frustrated in trying to balance mentoring with other aspects of their job.

Another important obstacle to faculty mentoring is that faculty can find it difficult to "relate" to students, and students can find it difficult to "relate" to faculty. Faculty may have long forgotten how hard the transition to college can be; they can be out of touch with contemporary concerns of young adults, they often themselves had a college experience quite different than that shared by 80% of college students today, who commute to urban campuses, while working at outside jobs. Likewise, new students can find it difficult to relate to faculty; they might not know many people who have spent their lives absorbed by inquiry, who love learning for its own sake, who seek out books and new knowledge as a matter of habit.

Faculty who were interviewed at IUPUI stressed the importance of student mentors' special peer relationship with first-year students. Here are some of their comments.

> When they hear it from me, who they perceive as much older than they, it may go in one ear and out the other. Mentor verifies, is closer to their age.
>
> The mentor is a student and is able to relate to the first year students on a student-to-student basis.
>
> When students don't understand they aren't as intimidated to tell the mentor. She is a friend they can relate to.
>
> As I get older I am more aware of my inadequacy to meet [new students'] needs. I freely acknowledge I need help. Could I have two mentors?

To supplement the attention caring faculty can provide, student mentors should be recruited to participate in the instructional teams of first-year seminars. Student mentors can bridge the divide between first-year students (whose experience they can well remember) and faculty (whose expectations they are beginning to understand). Under these circumstances, first-year seminars gain potential in providing a supportive environment for students to succeed.

A close study of the student mentoring component of IUPUI's first-year seminars suggests several strategies which could be employed to enhance the effectiveness of student mentors. These are briefly summarized below.

- Student mentors should be strong role models of academic success as well as strongly interested in helping other students succeed. To successfully recruit a sufficient number of qualified mentors, the position needs to be generously compensated, not only in with extrinsic incentives (like pay, prestige, parking places and publicity) but also through intrinsic ones (involving the opportunity to develop communication and leadership skills, the opportunity to be of service to others, and the chance of developing a close working relationship with a faculty member). Faculty and veteran mentors should join student affairs' professionals in recruiting student mentors.

• Student mentors and their faculty partners need to be linked up as early as possible before the first-year seminar begins, and need opportunities to receive training about the philosophy and rationale for first year seminars and for the inclusion of student mentors in first year seminars. On-going training and support also needs to be available, as does periodic evaluation of student and faculty mentor performance.

• Student mentors' roles should complement but not be identical to the roles faculty play in first year seminars. Student mentors should actively make contact with individual students in the seminar to see how they can be of assistance; they should advise faculty and other instructional team members from a student perspective how to present class material or how this material is being received; they should model appropriate academic behavior in the classroom themselves and engage themselves in helping students learn about campus resources and academic survival strategies, e.g., through classroom presentations. To students, student mentors are "more believable than a professor or advisor;" instructional teams need to capitalize on this. Student mentors should not be involved in evaluating student performance, since this can interfere with their ability to provide social support to students.

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Writing to Enhance, Demonstrate, and Evaluate Learning in the First-year Seminar: A Faculty Development Initiative

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Abstract: This paper would address ways in which writing can be integrated into a first-year seminar, and how faculty development can play a significant role in helping such integration occur. The following topics would be considered:

a) why writing is widely acknowledged to be an important component of the first-year seminar;
b) the power of writing to improve learning, demonstrate or communicate learning to others, and evaluate learning;
c) concerns of faculty: why writing is not as widely integrated into the first year seminar as faculty would like;
d) how faculty development programs, specifically the Summer Faculty Writing Forum, can address these concerns;
e) the impact of the Forum on curricular plans of the participants in relation to writing.

Focus on Writing as a Tool and a Skill

One fundamental expectation of a university graduate is the ability to communicate effectively in writing. At IUPUI, writing is a significant component of students' undergraduate experiences, from the placement test and core writing courses required of all students to the capstone seminar, wherein most students in most programs demonstrate, through some kind of written performance, the knowledge and understanding they have gained in their major area of study. Writing is further emphasized in "The Principled Curriculum," the common core curriculum recently designed for all students in the School of Liberal Arts and the School of Science. This common core curriculum, as are all curricula at IUPUI, is predicated upon six principles of undergraduate learning that have been agreed upon by the campus faculty, the first of which stipulates, among other core skills, that students will be able to communicate effectively in writing.

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However, while effective written communication is one of the most important functions of writing on campus, it is not the only function. Writing to learn, which includes writing to make connections, writing to probe course concepts more deeply, and writing to promote critical thinking, can play a significant role in enhancing student learning, student engagement with course concepts, student performance on written tests and examinations, and, ultimately,--because of its potential to engage students more actively in their learning and improve their performance on tests—student retention.

Challenges to a Focus on Writing

Few faculty dispute the importance of writing, or the desirability of including written assignments in course work; however, many faculty feel that student writing is not as effective as it should be. Because weak written communication can be enormously time consuming to read and evaluate, faculty become reluctant to include as many written assignments in their course requirements as they would like to include, especially in large classes, and students consequently receive less and less practice in writing. Because they write less, their writing is less competent and less confident. An unfortunate cycle evolves that diminishes the quantity, the quality, and the variety of writing in many disciplines across the campus. While this cycle may not exist on every American campus, it is sufficiently widespread across the country to have created a nationally coalescing lore among both employers and professors about the weak writing skills of many current university graduates. Appropriate placement and a solid freshman writing program play an important role in developing students' writing skills. But it is not enough.

Writing is not a check-off skill; none of us learns to write and then needs to learn no more. Writing, in its many functions and modes, needs to occur throughout a student's undergraduate experience. The most logical place to help both students and faculty in all disciplines, schools, and programs to begin to appreciate writing as both a skill to communicate learning and a tool to improve learning across the curriculum is right at the start of the student's academic career. Yet first year classes are often the largest in section enrollment, therefore might seem to discourage the inclusion of much writing.

Learning communities, required of almost all entering students, offer a promising opportunity for developing campus-wide appreciation among both faculty and students for integrating writing as both a tool (for improved learning and critical thinking) and as a skill (for more effective written communication). At IUPUI, learning communities combine the first-year seminar with a multitude of different first-year courses across the campus. Whereas the first-year course sections may include over a hundred students, each first-year seminar will generally range from fifteen to fifty students, a much more manageable number. Even so, there are many challenges to be addressed before writing can be effectively integrated into the learning community curriculum. In the first place, students often arrive on campus with little experience in writing, except in their English classes. This not only influences their confidence and competence in writing, but also their expectations for writing at the university. They are often surprised and sometimes disconcerted to learn that writing may be expected in many of their subject areas. In the second place, many faculty in disciplines other than writing, while having high expectations for written work, are uncomfortable when confronted with students who do not know who to write effectively in their discipline. Faculty understanding of discipline-specific writing is often more tacit than explicit, having evolved over many years of reading and writing in the discipline without ever having been overtly addressed. Finally, the first-year teaching seminar is often just a one-hour course, packed with essential pragmatic as well as scholarly content. Many faculty and students feel there is simply neither time nor curricular space for writing. While all of the above challenges are valid concerns, they can all be addressed. We have tried to meet these challenges through a process of faculty development, a major feature of which is the Summer Faculty Writing Forum.

Faculty Development to Meet Writing Challenges: The Summer Faculty Writing Program

Funded through The University College and the Provost's Office, the Summer Faculty Writing Forum is offered by the Director of Campus Writing, during the month of June, for two weeks of intensive exploration of curricular and pedagogical approaches to writing. While open to all faculty, both full and part time, preference is given to faculty who are teaching or who intend to teach in a learning community. Calls for applications are sent out during January and participants are selected by march, so that preparatory readings can be sent out. Each faculty participant receives an honorarium of $1000 in addition to course materials, and becomes part of a network of Forum Fellows. Forum Fellows are expected to take what they learn about writing to their respective departments and to serve as a resource for their colleagues. They are also encouraged, professionally and financially, to make presentations at Writing Across the Curriculum Conferences as well as at First-Year Experience Conferences. The main purpose of the Summer Faculty Writing Forum is to build a significant cadre of faculty who understand how writing can improve learning as well as demonstrate learning and who know several strategies for integrating writing effectively into their learning community curriculum.

Curriculum of the Summer Faculty Writing Forum

The curriculum of the Summer Faculty Writing Forum includes the following components:

a) differences between "writing to learn" and "writing to communicate learning"

b) how to design effective "writing to learn" assignments

c) how to design effective "writing to communicate learning" assignments

d) how to develop rubrics to evaluate writing

e) how to include more writing without unduly increasing faculty time for evaluation.

I will briefly address each of the above areas with specific reference to how it might be integrated into a first-year seminar.

Differences Between Writing To Learn And Writing To Communicate Learning

All faculty and students are familiar with writing that demonstrates learning. Tests, exams, essays, research reports, clinical reports, and the like are often assigned as a way for students to demonstrate what they know and for faculty to see how effectively their students have learned. This kind of writing, termed "high stakes writing" by Peter Elbow because evaluation can influence the final grade for the course, requires a high skill level in writing competence as well as writing confidence. Students need to know not only the course material but also how to articulate their understanding of this material effectively, often without opportunities for interim feedback or revision. While the correlation between what students know and how well they effectively articulate what they know seems intuitively axiomatic, we are all familiar with students who know the material but have difficulty demonstrating their knowledge effectively in writing and with students who write mechanically faultless prose that blandly says almost nothing meaningful or insightful. Furthermore, because writing that demonstrates learning influences the course grade, it needs to be graded by the instructor, resulting in an increased workload. For that reason, high stakes writing that demonstrates learning is assigned with minimal frequency, not only at the university level, but also at the high school and junior high school level. Lack of student competence and confidence in writing can be attributed not so much to a latent inability to write effectively, but rather to lack of sufficient opportunity for students to practice and develop their skills in writing that demonstrates their learning. Paradoxically, while high stakes writing is assigned less frequently than students need to gain competence and confidence in writing that demonstrates learning, it is assigned more frequently than any other kind of writing.

On the other hand, writing-to-learn, which requires little or no grading by the instructor and yet can significantly enhance student learning, is assigned very rarely. Writing-to-learn can play an important role in developing student confidence and competence while only minimally influencing faculty workload: the one-minute essay, the five-minute essay, the quick summary or synthesis or analysis, the written explanation of complex processes, policies, or procedures are all examples of writing-to-learn assignments. During the Summer Faculty Writing Forum, faculty are introduced to the above writing assignments by doing them themselves, in relation to the concepts presented during the Forum. In other words, they are, in fact, writing to learn as they are learning about writing-to-learn. The move to making connections between these short writing tasks and the pragmatic processes and scholarly concepts they are teaching in the first-year seminar comes very quickly, as course participants examine the template of the first-year seminar and see ways to use these writing tasks to help students understand these processes and concepts more thoroughly.

How to design effective "writing-to-learn" assignments

Because of their significantly different functions, the main observable difference between writing-to-learn assignments and traditional writing assignments is their length. Writing-to-learn assignments tend to be very tightly focused on one particular concept or process or a very specific application. They are generally written during a class session, and immediately read by a classmate or else read by the instructor before the next class meeting. The purpose of these writing tasks is to ensure that students have understood a particular concept, process, or application. They provide both pedagogical and curricular benefits, insofar as they provide a check for each student on the extent to which he or she understands a particular aspect of the course and a check for faculty on the extent to which their class of students understands a particular aspect of the course. They also provide practice in the kinds of critical thinking required of the course and increased opportunities to use the terminology of the discipline in writing.

Therefore, writing-to-learn tasks must have a tight focus and require some aspect of specified critical thinking and/or discipline-specific terminology. Faculty participants look at several critical thinking taxonomies and consider those kinds of critical thinking most particular to their discipline. They then consider what kinds of writing-to-learn activities would be of greatest benefit both to their students and to them as teachers. For example, do they want their students to anticipate the information that will come next in the lecture? Do they want their students to relate the main point of today's lecture to the main point of the previous lecture? Do they want their students to apply a particular concept or process just learned in the lecture to a different circumstance to test their understanding? Do they want to know if any parts of the lecture or lesson were confusing? All of these questions can be attended to in short, writing-to-learn tasks that take little time to read and require no grading. Often, the writing is read by other students to check accuracy or variations of response. Faculty participants plan questions and try them out on each other to fine-tune the wording of the tasks for clarity, focus, and precision.

These assignments are ideal for learning communities because they generally use only three to ten minutes of class time, engage students actively, even during a lecture section, and provide opportunities for students just entering the scholarly community of the university to check out their understanding of concepts and processes frequently, directly, and with immediate feedback.

How to design effective "writing-to-communicate-learning" assignments

While these kinds of writing assignments are already familiar to all faculty, since they have all written them as students and most have assigned them throughout their teaching careers, there are many ways to fine tune faculty skills in the design of these assignments. Just being among a group of faculty from different disciplines and seeing the similarities and differences among the writing assignments given by different faculty serves as a catalyst for discussing a variety of approaches to designing writing assignments. Looking at the verbs provides particular insights. For example, when a history professor writes, "Discuss…" is she looking for the same kind of writing as a chemistry professor who writes, "Discuss…"? We talk about building in structures that enable students to know what kind of discussion is expected, what kind of evidence is required, and what kind of support or degree of amplification is necessary. We look at how the writing assignment relates directly to stated course goals, and how to make these ties more explicit to students, so that the relationship between writing tasks and course goals is obvious. We also look at how to build into the writing assignment the particular features that are going to be evaluated, so that students are aware of what expected of them. Finally, we look at including the scholarly processes of writing the assignment as part of the assignment. For example, if research is expected, then it may help to require an annotated bibliography. This introduces students to a way of researching that will be helpful throughout their years at university, and will show the professor the extent to which students can select and understand material in response to a discipline-specific task. Or if the professor likes to have a large final project that synthesizes many aspects of the course, it may be helpful to divide the project into parts that can be handed in at different times during the semester, so that students are not trying to get it all done during the last week of classes.

While faculty in one credit-hour first-year seminars rarely assign extended writing tasks, most want to engage students in some kind of writing that ties together many of the first-year seminar concepts with the concepts of the disciplinary course with which it is paired. This part of the Forum helps faculty to design that kind of an assignment.

How to develop rubrics for evaluating writing assignments

Of course, the consequence of designing writing assignments that communicate learning is having to evaluate them. Faculty in disciplines other than writing want to evaluate student understanding of course concepts, not writing competence. In the Forum, faculty participants list the kinds of knowledge, understanding, or applications they are looking for in the writing, and then develop descriptions of their expectations for each item on the list. For example, if a professor identifies "provides sufficient support for assertions, opinions, or conclusions" as one kind of knowledge, understanding, or application expected in the paper, then that professor would be asked to describe the differences between excellent, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory performance for that particular requirement. Just the exercise of identifying the main kinds of knowledge, understanding, or application expected to be demonstrated in a particular writing assignment leads to a deeper understanding of how to evaluate student writing; describing the qualities for each gives faculty a much greater sense of the challenges faced by students when doing these writing assignments, and a stronger sense not only of where they might go astray, but also of how to help them troubleshoot some of these more challenging areas.

While creating the rubric for a major writing assignment takes time, that time is a true investment in three ways: first, if the faculty member shows the rubric to students when the assignment is given, students will know more precisely what is expected, and will write to a higher standard; second (and following from the first), because students are writing to a higher standard, grading is easier because the writing is better; third, the assigning of grades seems less arbitrary both to students and faculty because the grades are based on a structure that students know about.

Managing the Paper Load: Writing without a Whole Lot More Grading

Increasing the number of writing assignments will, of necessity, increase the number of times you grade written work, and the amount of time you spend on grading. However, that increase is eminently controllable, and even potentially pleasurable. At the Summer Faculty Writing Forum, we emphasize two axioms:

1. Faculty do not need to read or grade everything that students write;
2. Better written assignments lead to less time reading and grading written work.

We consider how we can use collaborative learning and peer response groups for both writing-to-learn and writing to demonstrate learning assignments. Since not all faculty (nor all students) feel comfortable with collaborative learning and peer response groups, we spend some time discussing strategies that lead to more productive and more successful group work. We talk about highly focused and explicitly articulated expectations for peer response, providing structure and guidance for students when they respond to each other's written work. We explain that the goal for group work is to help every student understand course concepts more deeply, apply them more insightfully (or more creatively as the case may be), and articulate their understanding and their applications more clearly and effectively. Then we look at specific structures we can develop to enable students to achieve our expectations. The end result should be that when students finally do hand in written work to the professor, it demonstrates effective thinking as well as effective writing in response to the assignment and in relation to course concepts.

An exemplary writing assignment for the first-year seminar: The Principled Scavenger Hunt

Because it is so difficult to integrate writing meaningfully into a one-credit hour course already packed with content, it is essential that the writing be tied integrally to the content and goals of the course. The following assignment puts into practice many of the concepts discussed above, and is particularly helpful on our campus because it introduces students during their first assignment to the major principles that will guide their undergraduate learning at IUPUI. Here is a copy of the assignment:

The Principled Scavenger Hunt
Assignment Sheet

Purpose: This assignment is to acquaint you with the six Principles of Undergraduate Learning, and to show you that they are not just abstractions living in some intellectual ivory tower, but rather real and significant aspects of your learning experiences at IUPUI.

Task: You are to collect examples of one or more of the principles of undergraduate learning as you find them in your coursework, lectures, interactions with fellow students or faculty, or in some other academic, artistic, or sporting event that occurs at or in connection with IUPUI. You will write the example on a notecard, and explain how your example demonstrates the principle.

Method: You will be assigned to a group. It will be the responsibility of your group to collect as many examples of each principle as you can. You will write each principle and your explanation of that principle on a separate note card. Your group will then select the best examples, and prepare a ten minute presentation of the principles to the rest of the class.

Presentation: Your group will give a ten-minute presentation to demonstrate to other members of the class your understanding of the six principles of undergraduate learning through the examples you have found. Your presentation might be a narrative or a dramatic scene, a lecture, or a group reading, whichever you decide is most effective.

Evaluation: There will be three kinds of evaluation of this exercise:

a) Your classmates will evaluate each group's presentation according to
   - i. clarity (i.e. examples of the principles were clearly presented)
   - ii. interest (i.e. students found the presentation informative and/or entertaining)
   - iii. engagement (i.e. students considered that your group really engaged with the assignment),

b) You will each evaluate the assignment in a journal entry, considering the following:
   - i. What you learned from doing the assignment;
   - ii. How you worked within the group process;
   - iii. How this assignment could be changed to make it more interesting or more beneficial to you as a student.

c) Your instructor will evaluate the work she has observed in your groups, your presentation (and the class evaluation of the presentation), and your journal evaluation of the project.

What's in it for you? The six Principles of Undergraduate Learning form the basis for all your undergraduate learning experiences at IUPUI. By actively seeking out examples of these

> principles in your courses and other experiences at IUPUI, you will begin to develop a solid understanding of the connections among your courses and among the expectations of your professors, all of which might otherwise seem kind of disconnected and confusing.

During the Summer Faculty Writing Forum, participants are introduced to this assignment by actually doing it. In that way, they can appreciate any difficulties their students might experience with the assignment.

Impact, Lessons Learned, and Future Plans

One notion is clear. While faculty who volunteer to teach in a learning community or a first-year seminar are generally strongly committed to teaching, many are unfamiliar with the power of writing to enhance learning and critical thinking. Faculty development can play a key role in expanding their understanding. However, just providing a workshop, even a sustained two-week workshop, is insufficient. Workshop participants need to be invited into a long-term expanding network of faculty who converse about teaching and learning in relation to the principles and strategies they have learned during faculty development workshops. Otherwise the immediate impact is strong, but the long term impact diminishes.

Based on the success of the first two Summer Faculty Writing Forums, the administration of University College has decided to retain the focus on faculty and other members of instructional teams in learning communities for the next few years. It has also decided to reinforce their focus on writing by establishing a satellite writing center for students and members of the instructional teams of learning communities. The Office of Campus Writing holds brown bag seminars for participants of previous Summer Faculty Writing Forums to talk about their applications and to showcase particular pedagogical strategies with writing. For example, one participant from the first Summer Faculty Writing Forum has been using writing-to-learn assignments to help his students understand quantitative analysis. Over a two-year period, with a total of 138 students, he has noticed phenomenal improvement in the understanding of major concepts, with student achievement rising from an average of 63% to 92.5% on the easiest questions, from 58% to 72% on the moderately difficult questions, and from 38% to 62% on the most difficult questions. Even more amazing, he discovered that writing-to-learn assignments, in his words, "leveled the playing field" for students in the lower third of his class; these students made the most amazing gains, almost as though writing provided them with a learning strategy or way of engaging with quantitative concepts that they had never before tried. This same faculty member is now moving toward dialogic journals as an ongoing writing-to-learn part of his curriculum in engineering and technology. While I have focused on the applications of just one participant, I could just as easily have written of the French teacher who now uses writing-to-learn to enhance language learning or the art teacher who uses writing to enhance the creative process. All three of these teachers presented their work at a national conference this fall, providing a scholarly outlet for their discoveries and applications. This provides an idea of the tremendous impact that faculty development can have when it is geared to institutional goals, principles of good teaching and learning, and opportunities for scholarly dissemination of what they have learned.

But what about the students in these teachers' classrooms? What have they learned, in addition to their course concepts? They have learned at the outset of their university education that writing is a powerful tool for learning and thinking. They have learned that writing is an important part of learning in all their subjects. They have gained confidence in using writing as both a tool to improve their learning and as a skill to demonstrate their learning. It's a good start!

A Collaborative Approach to Assessing Learning Communities

Victor M. H. Borden[1]

Abstract: A three-pronged assessment framework was designed to provide both formative and summative information about the effectiveness of IUPUI's University College (UC) programs and processes. One strand of this effort focuses on broad indicators of program effectiveness as demonstrated by student grade performance and persistence. The second strand focuses on the assessment of student learning outcomes during the early portions of college studies. The third strand attends to qualitative evaluations of the experiences of students, faculty and staff as they participate in UC programs. This chapter describes the genesis and structure of the overall framework as well as current and planned methods to assess learning communities.

A Collaborative Approach to Assessing Learning Communities

The RUSS project partners came together to review and improve programs that were designed to meet the needs of beginning urban university students. Although each university was developing a unique array of programs and supports, Learning Communities emerged as the common activity around which the project would evolve. The project itself was designed as a multi-level assessment, including the development of a common entering student survey and the conduct of institutional self-studies culminating in site visits among project participants and external consultants.

Each university participating in the RUSS project had in place significant ongoing assessment activities that included as important components entering student surveys and the evaluation of first-year support programs. The challenge and promise of the RUSS project was to weave these ongoing efforts into the collaboration, allowing each university to expand and refine program assessments as faculty and staff gained knowledge and experience through the RUSS benchmarking process.

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Like all partners, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) took advantage of this opportunity. With some initial experiences in Learning Community Program evaluation, and with an actively expanding campus-wide assessment initiative, IUPUI faculty and staff looked for ways to expand the use and usefulness of assessment practices for first-year support programs and more generally for undergraduate learning outcomes. The remainder of this essay traces the development of these Learning Community assessment practices at IUPUI with the RUSS project serving as a major catalyst for recent development efforts.

Focusing on Undergraduate Learning and Assessment

In the early 1990s, IUPUI began a two-pronged effort to improve undergraduate learning. Two new Vice Chancellor-level administrative divisions were created within two years. One—Undergraduate Education—was responsible for programs supporting students in the early years of their undergraduate careers. The second—Planning and Institutional Improvement (PAII)—was responsible for strategic planning, student outcomes assessment, institutional research, and placement testing.

Through the mid-1990s, these two units worked cooperatively to support each other's efforts. Undergraduate Education developed and refined an array of support programs, including general advising and academic supports for poorly prepared students. Work within the PAII offices revolved around the development of a formal campus mission and goals statement (including undergraduate education as a central component), design and implementation of academic program review, increased management reporting and analysis and improved placement testing.

In 1997, the relationship between these units become more closely intertwined as campus leaders worked to transform the administrative unit, Undergraduate Education, into an academic unit, University College. Institutional research staff were asked to focus their efforts on the evaluation of programs that were incorporated into this new unit. After this initial evaluation, the IUPUI Faculty Council approved the formation of University College, with an explicit provision that its program be evaluated continuously as to their efficiency and effectiveness.

An Initial Evaluation of Learning Community Effectiveness

Learning Communities have been shown to be an effective means for increasing student involvement in learning, thereby improving student performance and persistence (Levine & Tompkins, 1996; Tinto, Russo & Kadel, 1994). However, the success of any particular implementation of a Learning Communities program, or of an individual Learning Community is far from guaranteed. Moreover, it is difficult to generalize from the outcomes of one type of Learning Community to another as their implementation varies so widely across and within colleges and universities. It is reasonable to expect that not every instance of a learning community will be equally effective for any or all enrolled students. Since their development requires a significant investment of time and money, it is important that those responsible for developing, administering and funding these efforts evaluate the effectiveness of the program as a whole as well as its individual components.

After several semesters of pilot efforts, the evaluation of Learning Communities at IUPUI began in earnest with the study that was requested early in 1997 when the formation of University College was being debated. The Learning Communities program was one of several being evaluated as part of this organizational restructuring. The analysis included a description of each program, including its content and target audience, the identification of one or more comparison groups of "untreated" students, and a comparison of program participant and non-participant outcomes, controlling for students' initial differences in known correlates of performance and persistence (see Borden & Rooney, 1998 for a complete description of this study).

According to this initial analysis, Learning Communities did not have a measurable impact on student grade performance or persistence. However, many faculty and staff recognized that the Learning Communities program was being evaluated during a period of development that was to continue after the study was completed. Participating faculty were convinced that the limited results of the study were related to start-up inconsistencies and unevenness, but that the program had great potential. In many ways, the study came to be considered a baseline for considering the impact of program improvements.

The core outcome measures from this analysis (participant and non-participant differences in grades and persistence, controlling for background differences) were adopted as performance indicators. They have been tracked each year in the campus' annual Fall Enrollment Analysis. The impact of Learning Communities (not the background differences of participants) achieved significance by the following semester (fall 1997), but these measures do not reveal what aspects of the program are particularly effective or not effective.

Principles for Undergraduate Learning

Parallel with these developments, IUPUI faculty leaders worked to develop the campus assessment of general education. These efforts culminated with the articulation of a set of Principles for Undergraduate Learning (PUL) that was approved by the Faculty Council in May 1998. Rather than a 'pre-major' component of undergraduate education, IUPUI faculty chose to view general education as permeating the entire undergraduate career—from entry-level courses to senior capstone experiences. Aligning department assessment efforts with the PULs was delegated to the Program Review and Assessment Committee (PRAC), comprised of the faculty chosen to lead assessment within the academic schools and departments.

The PULs provide a common language for describing outcomes of student learning beyond grades and rates of persistence. They are stated at a fairly general level, allowing for flexibility in their application to specific majors or programs. For example, the first principle is described as follows[3]:

1. Core Communication and Quantitative Skills

Definition: The ability of students to write, read, speak and listen, perform quantitative analysis, and use information resources and technology—the foundation skills necessary for all IUPUI students to succeed.

Outcomes: This set of skills is demonstrated, respectively, by the ability (a) to express ideas and facts to others effectively in a variety of written formats, (b) to comprehend, interpret, and analyze texts, (c) to communicate orally in one-on-one and group settings, (d) to solve problems that are quantitative in nature, and (e) to make efficient use of information resources and technology for personal and professional needs.

The integrative nature of the PULs is articulated in their introduction, which states:

"Over the next several years, faculty who teach undergraduates will determine which of the principles will be taught and assessed in each of their courses. In addition, faculty in each discipline will determine what graduates in that major will know and be able to do at the senior level to illustrate competence in each of the six areas addressed by the

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[3] The IUPUI Principles for Undergraduate Learning can be accessed at the URL: http://www.jaguars.iupui.edu/gened/gnedprin.htm

> *Principles. Every IUPUI undergraduate will be introduced to these principles during the first year of study. Introductory information about each major will identify where competence related to each principle will be learned and assessed - at entry, intermediate and exit levels."*

IUPUI's Principles of Undergraduate Learning provide a common frame of reference and a vehicle for integrating assessment efforts both horizontally, (across the campus) and vertically (throughout the undergraduate career). The explicit call for introduction to these principles in the first year created an intentional link between Learning Communities and the articulation and assessment of learning outcomes throughout all academic programs.

Putting the Pieces Together

The momentum of development within undergraduate education and assessment, coupled with the articulation of the Principles of Undergraduate Learning, set the stage for a comprehensive approach to assessing Learning Communities as part of broader campus assessment efforts. The RUSS project, with its focus on Learning Communities, served as a catalyst to transform these cooperative program development, evaluation, and improvement efforts to a higher, more collaborative level. The project served as a platform for bringing together a range of campus partners to take shared ownership of the goals and challenges of supporting first-year students at an urban university. The focus on Learning Communities compelled this level of partnership, especially given IUPUI's unique instructional teams approach to Learning Communities (see Orme and Van Voorhis, this volume).

Faculty and staff from University College and the institutional research office collaborated on the development of an integrating framework to guide the assessment of University College programs. The development was guided by the following goals:

- Provide both formative and summative information about the effectiveness of first-year programs and processes to support the planning and improvement efforts of the faculty and staff involved in managing these efforts as well as the campus-at-large.
- Balance the involvement of managing faculty and staff with the objectiveness of third party evaluators.
- Support faculty, staff, and student development in the area of program assessment and improvement.
- Create linkages between these programs and other programs in academic and administrative units.
- Integrate with other related undergraduate student learning assessment efforts.

The resulting framework delineates three parallel lines of inquiry:

1. Evaluating the impact of academic and academic support programs on student performance and persistence. (Program Performance Indicators)

Efforts in this area have in common the application of student records and general survey data to assess very basic dimensions of student performance and persistence. In a sense, these evaluations address the "bottom line" institutional outcomes, such as course grades and persistence. They provide important indicators of program effectiveness, but they do not necessarily get at other important outcomes of student and faculty development. More importantly, these evaluations do not provide the kinds of information needed to understand why or for whom a particular program or service works. However, the common indicators and methods used in this fashion help create important linkages among assessment efforts throughout the campus' academic programs and support services.

2. Assessing student learning through the first two years of college study in terms of levels of progress and proficiency as guided by the Principles of Undergraduate Learning (Student Learning Outcomes).

The institution's Principles of Undergraduate Learning (PUL) provide a set of dimensions for articulating prerequisite skills and knowledge. Ultimately, we seek to enable all students to progress to sophomore and junior level standing by attaining standards of proficiency across the PULs. To do this, all lower division courses should be described in terms of the standard(s) of proficiency that successful students achieve. Articulating these competencies across the lower division curriculum and for progress through specific degree programs would allow students and advisors flexibility in course selection and would also accommodate transfer students and the assessment of experiential learning.

We have begun to formulate and implement a series of steps to achieve this long term goal that include:

a. Analyzing current degree progression requirements to develop a set of course completion expectations for students progressing through the first 26/56 hours of an undergraduate career and assess student progress according to the number of students who complete the expected courses upon accruing 26 and 56 hours toward an undergraduate degree;

b. Developing standards of proficiency across the PULs that correspond to the course expectations for progression to various stages of degree completion.

c. Evaluating lower division courses against these PUL standards of proficiency (i.e., course-based assessments);

d. Evaluating the effectiveness of advising and support services based on students' timely progression through courses that meet the stated expectations;

e. Developing several "cross-curriculum" methods, such as student portfolios and student focus groups, to assess the overall efficacy of these expectations for student progress; and

f. Assessing individual student learning outcomes in basic skills for students who require remedial course work.

3. Qualitative evaluations of the experiences of students, faculty and staff as they participate within the programs and services of University College. (Process Evaluation).

As we improve our capacity to measure a wide array of student outcomes, it becomes increasingly important that we develop ways to assess how our programs and processes work to increase desirable outcomes and decrease undesirable ones. Such assessments will generally take the form of qualitative inquiries into the experiences of students, faculty, and staff in these programs. For example, we know that our Learning Communities program produces an overall increase in persistence, even when controlling for background differences among participants and non-participants. We also know the various implementation of Learning Communities do not work equally well for all students. What we don't know are the conditions under which the program works best. During the 1999-2000 academic year, six faculty fellows are engaged in qualitative inquiries into various aspects of IUPUI's Learning Communities Programs. These qualitative inquiries will help to round out the our knowledge as to how and when Learning Communities work best for the IUPUI's diverse student population.

IUPUI's three-pronged assessment framework is illustrated in Figure 1. The shaded box cutting across the three branches highlights assessment activities in each line of inquiry devoted to Learning Communities. The Steering Committee ensures that the various assessment efforts develop as complementary and collaborative practices, and that assessment results are used to guide program improvements.

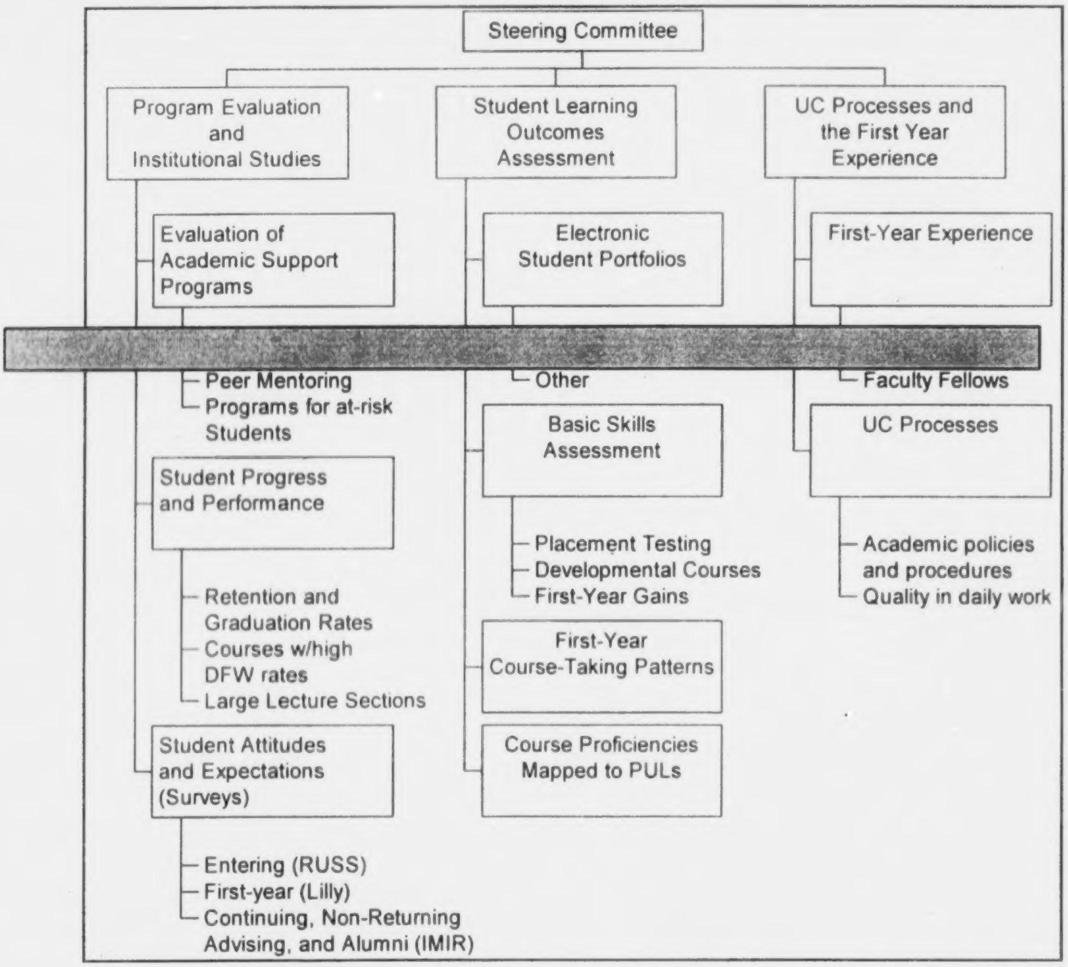
Steering Committee
Program Evaluation and Institutional Studies
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment
UC Processes and the First Year Experience
Evaluation of Academic Support Programs
Peer Mentoring
Programs for at-risk Students
Student Progress and Performance
Retention and Graduation Rates
Courses w/high DFW rates
Large Lecture Sections
Student Attitudes and Expectations (Surveys)
Entering (RUSS)
First-year (Lilly)
Continuing, Non-Returning Advising, and Alumni (IMIR)
Electronic Student Portfolios
Other
Basic Skills Assessment
Placement Testing
Developmental Courses
First-Year Gains
First-Year Course-Taking Patterns
Course Proficiencies Mapped to PULs
First-Year Experience
Faculty Fellows
UC Processes
Academic policies and procedures
Quality in daily work

Figure 1. IUPUI Framework for Assessing Early College Experiences and Outcomes

These three lines of assessment inquiry at IUPUI are developing at differing rates. The 'left branch' is the longest active and most well developed line, with up to five years of research on first-year student attitudes, behaviors, and basic outcomes (grades and persistence). The 1997 evaluation of Learning Communities and annual follow-up on student performance and persistence remains at the center of this effort, but results of several general undergraduate surveys have been helpful in highlighting specific areas of student concern (e.g., advising, campus life), and needed student supports (e.g., childcare, spaces for studying and relaxing between classes).

Early efforts along the 'right branch' focused on process improvement efforts derived from a quality improvement initiative of the mid-1990s. Specifically, several 'quality in daily work' analyses examined the scheduling of advising appointments, clarity of communications, and similar management issues.

The RUSS project provided a significant boost to the right branch of inquiry. The self-study and site visit provided a comprehensive qualitative assessment of the strengths and challenges of the Learning Communities program. This work continues through the University College faculty fellows, who are exploring more specific aspects of the Learning Communities program, such as the role of student mentors, in greater depth.

The middle branch of this framework represents the connecting point among the assessment of University College programs, more general assessments of early college learning outcomes, and assessment in the major. The development of this line of inquiry requires even broader collaboration among a range of faculty and staff throughout the campus. Not surprisingly, these developments take more time. Initial efforts are focusing on the development of electronic student portfolios, using specific Learning Communities to develop prototypes. More recently, additional faculty fellows were appointed to explore the manifestation of the Principles of Undergraduate Learning across the curriculum. These fellows have been asked to balance their studies across course level (entry- through senior-level), as well as across departments and programs.

Summary and Conclusions

The assessment of Learning Communities at IUPUI is part of a comprehensive and integrative approach to assessing undergraduate learning. The path to this approach was paved by recent efforts to focus campus resources on undergraduate education and on planning, assessment and improvement. Cooperation among various administrative units illuminated this path during the early phases, but was not sufficient to attain the level of relevance and usefulness necessary to yield comprehensive improvements of academic and academic support programs. The RUSS project was one of several collaborative ventures that helped IUPUI faculty and staff take the assessment of Learning Communities to the next level of development. Although designed as an inter-institution collaboration, each campus involved a variety of faculty and staff, thereby extending the collaborative spirit to within the participating institutions. The fit between the project design and parallel campus development efforts was made clear in the external consultants' report after the campus site visit. Recommendations for further developments of Learning Community assessment matched closely with ongoing efforts. The most striking similarity was a suggestion by the consultants to develop a questionnaire asking students whether Learning Community objectives were covered in class, were important to them, and whether they gained in their knowledge and skills related to those objectives. Unbeknown to the consultants, a survey instrument was in development at the time of the site visit to address those very questions.

The Learning Community Template survey was developed by two University College faculty fellows in collaboration with institutional research and University College staff. It was administered to students in all 108 Learning Community sections in the fall of 1999 with the help of faculty teaching those sections. In the coming months, student responses will be correlated with various attributes of the Learning Community sections derived through a content analysis of course syllabi.

With strong academic and administrative unit support, IUPUI now has in place an infrastructure for pursuing a comprehensive and collaborative approach to assessing Learning Communities and undergraduate education in general. Given the size, complexity, and decentralized organization of our institution, the road ahead will not be entirely smooth. The experiences gained and partnerships developed through the RUSS project provide significant momentum for riding through the bumps and occasional storms that lie ahead.

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What Students Need to Know to Make A Successful Transition to College: Evaluating the Template for First Year Seminar

Ann Lowenkron[1], Richard Magjuka[2]

Abstract: Learning Communities have rapidly emerged as a vital component of the first year experience for entering freshmen at IUPUI in an effort to foster student development and help give those new to college the tools necessary for success. Well over two thousand students enter Learning Communities each semester. A critical issue when evaluating the Learning Community program is how to most effectively design a large-scale initiative that spans multiple schools, hundreds of faculty and other instructional team members and thousands of students. A template was developed by the faculty of University College to define and describe the common curricular and pedagogical elements to be incorporated into all sections of the first year seminar whether taught through University College or by individual schools. A research study was conducted to systematically assess whether the key elements described in the template for first year seminars are the most appropriate and examine the influence exerted by different designs and instructor practices on key learning outcomes. Results are reported and discussed. Recommendations are offered to guide research and practice in this area.

Introduction

Making the transition from high school to college is difficult for most students at best. For first generation college students, minority students, older students, those returning to school and students with poor high school records adjusting to a new learning environment presents special challenges. Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI) is located in an urban center, does not provide a residence experience, and attracts many students who fall into high risk groups. These students are often juggling work and family responsibilities along with school, and are only on campus to attend class. It is difficult for them to make the necessary connections and take advantage of the support systems offered by the university. All of these factors contribute to a very high rate of attrition. University College was founded in 1998 to address some of the challenges faced by students at IUPUI and provide a common gateway to academic programs for all entering students.

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The cornerstone of the programs offered through University College is the Learning Community. Learning Communities may consist of a course called the First Year Seminar that stands alone or one that is linked to another course taken concurrently by a student. Historically, the concept of a transitional course designed to help beginning students make a successful transition to higher education began at IUPUI in 1994. A small group of faculty from the School of Liberal Arts developed a new course for entering freshmen that focused on the skills they would need to do college level work. The School of Science first offered its version of a first year seminar called "Windows on Science" in 1996. At about that time, through a program called "Joining the Scholarly Community," the university provided internal grants to other schools on campus to encourage them to develop their own version of a first year course for students planning to study in their school.

Today, all schools on the IUPUI campus that serve undergraduate students, as well as the School of Medicine which offers an honors section for students planning to apply for medical school, offer first year seminars. All entering students are required to enroll in a section of the course during their first semester. The largest number of sections are taught by University College itself. These sections are primarily for students who are undecided about their major, or do not meet the criteria for admission to seminars taught by specific schools. University College also serves as the unit that coordinates the overall program.

In order to assure that certain basic concepts were taught in all versions of the first year seminars, a template including specific course objectives was developed by University College faculty. Individual schools are asked to address the objectives identified in the template as well as teach content that meets the specific needs of students who will be pursuing degrees in their schools. All seminars have the same goal however, helping students learn how to navigate the many obstacles they face in order to be successful in college. Seminars are taught by an instructional team led by a faculty member who sets the tone. Other team members include an academic advisor, a librarian, a technical support person and a student mentor. Where possible, class size is kept to a maximum of 25 to insure that students are known individually by instructional team members, and have the opportunity to develop peer relationships. Significant class time is spent in activities that encouraged students to practice oral and written communication skills, work in groups, and learn the use of the technologies needed in future classes including how to use the college library for research. Each seminar develops activities and assignments designed to establish positive connections between the student, co-curricular activities, and resources on campus crucial to their academic success. In the fall of 1999, 108 sections of First Year Seminars serving 2657 students were taught at IUPUI.

As part of an overall assessment of the effectiveness of the Learning Communities program seven fellowships were awarded to faculty for the academic year 1999-2000. Examined by the fellows were the effectiveness of the use of instructional teams, the peer mentoring program, innovative pedagogies used to meet the objectives of first year seminars, and partnerships between faculty and academic advisors to enhance advising services to students. A fellowship was awarded to conduct a qualitative study of the impact of learning community participation on student academic success and another to study what the "scholarship of teaching" means on the IUPUI campus and the conditions that work for or against enactment of that definition. Lastly, a fellowship was awarded to assess the curricular aspects of the "template for first year seminars." The preliminary findings of this last fellowship will be reported here.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to assess how the curricular components and learning outcomes defined in the template document developed by the faculty of University College to serve as the common core of content for all first year seminars on campus have been adopted and implemented in various iterations of that course at IUPUI.

METHOD

Peter Ewell (1997) suggested that when curricular assessment is undertaken, one must consider how the curriculum was designed, what is taught and what students actually learn may have little to do with one another in content, coverage, or effectiveness. He recommended a model be used that examines; (1) the designed curriculum found in the catalogue and syllabus, (2) the expectational curriculum consisting of the specific assignments and level of performance expected of students and the manner in which student performance is assessed, (3) the delivered curriculum or what faculty actually teach and the consistency with which they teach certain content (based on what they believe to be important), and (4) the experienced curriculum which is what students report that they have learned. Based on this guidance, a three pronged approach was used to examine the objectives included in the template that provides the foundation for first year seminars taught at IUPUI. Data were collected from students, instructional team members, and from analysis of the syllabi for all sections of First Year Seminars.

Student Component:

A survey was developed for students based on learning outcomes found in the template. There were 36 items organized under eight headings. For the most part, items were worded exactly as they were written in the template. Several were reworded to increase clarity for students and two were omitted because it was felt by the instrument developers that their meaning was unclear or the item was repetitive with other items. Students were asked to rate each item twice. Using a five point Likkert scale, with four being "very important," three being "moderately important," two being "somewhat important," and one being "not important," they were asked to assess how important they felt that the content described in each objective would be in providing information or a skill that they would need to be successful in college. A zero option for "do not know" was also offered. The second scale asked students to rate each item for how much they believe they learned about that objective in the first year seminar they were taking. Again a five-point scale was offered. On that scale, four represented "learned a great deal about," three represented "learned a fair amount about," two represented "learned a little about," and one represented "did not learn at all." A zero option for "do not know" was also offered for this scale. Several additional items were included in the survey to gain information about current educational goals, how time over a typical week was spent, absence from class, specific academic difficulties (chosen from a list provided) and problems that interfered with studies such as a job or child care among others (again chosen from a list provided). Also asked was whether the student had a plan to reduce the impact of the problem or problems identified. A few other items were included for students registered in the sections taught by the School of Business.

All 2657 students enrolled in the 108 sections of the First Year Seminars taught in the Fall 1999 semester were given the opportunity to fill out the survey. The majority of students filled out the survey during class in the last few weeks of the semester (73 sections). Students in the remaining 35 sections received surveys at their home and were asked to return them in an envelope provided. A reminder postcard was sent to students who did not return the surveys by the date requested. Students were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and that this survey was not meant to be a course or faculty evaluation. They were told that they would have an opportunity to do course and faculty evaluations at another time.

Instructional Team Component:

A survey with the same 36 items used for students was developed to evaluate whether members of the instructional teams teaching first year seminars at IUPUI believe that the learning outcomes identified in the template are the most appropriate for giving students the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in college. A five-point Likkert scale was also used in this survey. On the importance scale circling four represented "very important," three represented "moderately important," two represented "somewhat important," and one represented "not at all important." The zero option was used to indicate "not my area of interest." The second scale asked members of the instructional team to indicate the degree to which a particular outcome was emphasized in the section of the seminar in which they were involved. Four indicated "strong emphasis," three represented "moderate degree of emphasis," two represented "slight degree of emphasis," one represented "not addressed at all." The zero option was also used in this scale to indicate "not my area of interest." Information about the responder's role on the instructional team, the number of semesters that individual has taught first year seminars, whether the seminar was school specific or taught through University College, whether the seminar was linked to another course or not and whether the responder felt the seminar should be linked. Three open-ended questions were also asked. They were: (1) "How did the variety of backgrounds and abilities of the various students in your section impact on the delivery of your course?" (2) "What type of support would you like to see for people new to teaching first year seminars?" and (3) "What changes would you recommend for first year seminars?"

Surveys were distributed to all members of instructional teams via campus mail at the beginning of the semester following the semester in which they taught the first year seminar. A return envelope was provided. A reminder was sent to those who had not returned the survey by the date specified.

Analysis of Syllabi:

Syllabi for all sections of first year seminars were also reviewed. A wide variety of formats were found in the various syllabi reflecting the many differences between schools and the individual preferences of instructional teams. Course objectives found in the syllabus for each section were examined to determine whether they reflected the eight overall learning outcomes found in the template. One rater was used to examine all the syllabi and indicate on a form whether the objective was found in the syllabi or not. A second question asked the rater to indicate whether the pedagogical strategies, in class and out-of-class assignments, and other class activities support achievement of the eight overall learning outcomes. Additionally, the syllabi were examined to determine how grades are awarded, whether the course is required by the school in which it is taught, and other features of the syllabi that indicate adherence to the objectives in the template.

RESULTS

Data collection from members of the instructional team and analysis of syllabi is ongoing. Findings will be reported at a later date. Data collection from the student surveys has been completed and will be reported here.

Student Surveys:

Data were analyzed for the total sample of students (see table 1), for those students who were in sections taught through University College (see table 2), for those students who were in sections taught by the Kelly School of Business, the school that has the largest number of sections outside of University College and features a required service learning component with Junior Achievement (see table 3), and all other school specific sections (see table 4).

Reliability using Cronbach's coefficient alpha was calculated for items under each of the eight overriding objectives found in the template. For the importance scale *alpha* ranges between 68 and 89. For the knowledge scale *alpha* ranges between 74 and 87.

Table One

Item-by-Item Results for Learning Community Template Survey Knowledge and Importance Items

	Knowledge Gained				Importance			
Item	N	Mean	SD	% 3 or 4	N	Mean	SD	% 3 or 4
Total Sample								
Learn about the culture and values of the college environment:								
1. Understand how the academic setting encourages an open exchange of ideas.	1332	3.24	0.73	86.6	1313	2.84	0.81	68.8
2. Develop a respect for cultural diversity among peers and others encountered on campus.	1350	3.44	0.75	87.6	1313	2.83	0.98	63.6
3. Understand the meaning of academic integrity and how it applies to issues such as plagiarism and copyright laws in the academic setting.	1348	3.51	0.74	89.0	1329	2.91	0.97	66.3
4. Understand how the IUPUI Principles of Undergraduate Education can be used by students to guide their course selection.	1309	3.29	0.79	84.7	1298	2.78	0.96	63.5
Make connections inside and outside the classroom with faculty, staff, and other students that will enable you to experience a safe, supportive, and positive learning environment on campus:								
5. Make use of the student learning center.	1319	3.06	0.88	75.3	1257	2.65	1.01	55.6
6. Broaden relationships with other students by participating in student organizations and co-curricular activities.	1325	3.01	0.91	73.4	1252	2.58	1.00	53.4
7. Establish a positive working relationship with your advisor	1349	3.38	0.77	87.1	1327	2.88	0.95	67.7

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8. Communicate freely with faculty in the courses in which you are enrolled related to course work and academic planning as well as other concerns.	1348	3.47	0.70	90.4	1335	2.96	0.90	71.0
9. Develop a relationship with your peer mentor so that you feel free to go to him or her for advice and support.	1292	3.04	0.91	74.6	1209	2.62	1.05	55.6
Learn communication skills that will be needed throughout your college experience:								
10. Improve your ability to complete written assignments.	1359	3.66	0.60	95.2	1328	2.97	0.94	72.7
11. Improve your ability to participate in small group discussions.	1353	3.41	0.75	87.7	1329	3.06	0.90	74.5
12. Feel more comfortable participating in large group or class discussions.	1348	3.40	0.79	87.2	1321	2.91	0.96	68.0
13. Communicate with faculty, advisors, librarians and peer mentors about how to improve your written and verbal communication skills.	1342	3.30	0.82	83.3	1294	2.69	0.95	58.5
Use critical thinking skills to solve academic and personal problems:								
14. Learn how to approach academic problems and issues from multiple perspectives.	1353	3.42	0.70	90.5	1328	2.73	0.89	62.3
15. Use critical thinking skills to analyze complex concepts in a field or discipline.	1344	3.37	0.75	87.1	1311	2.68	0.92	59.0
16. Use critical thinking skills to analyze and solve problems you face in your personal life.	1345	3.43	0.75	89.0	1307	2.75	0.98	61.8
Develop a basic understanding of the fundamentals of scholarly inquiry and how to use the University Libraries as a resource for acquiring information:								
17. Define the functions of various library services.	1346	3.22	0.82	81.1	1312	2.71	0.98	58.0
18. Locate library services within the University Libraries.	1348	3.37	0.77	86.3	1320	2.87	0.98	65.0
19. Use the University Library to do research for class assignments.	1349	3.50	0.72	90.4	1324	2.91	0.97	67.1
20. Determine how to frame questions that will identify what information is needed to answer that question.	1334	3.29	0.76	86.4	1300	2.63	0.92	55.5
Learn about and use campus resources for information technology to support your academic work and campus connections:								
21. Know the location and hours available of campus computer facilities.	1348	3.29	0.81	83.5	1301	2.71	1.02	57.3
22. Communicate using e-mail.	1343	3.52	0.73	89.5	1312	3.23	0.98	77.4
23. Know how to use the Internet as a resource to support academic work.	1347	3.62	0.64	93.8	1331	3.17	0.93	77.2
24. Know about resources on campus for acquiring specific software skills needed for course work or major.	1342	3.44	0.74	89.3	1285	2.73	1.01	58.3
Learn about your abilities, study skills, and life demands so that you can develop and use these more effectively in pursuit of your academic goals:								
25. Understand your learning style and how knowing your learning style will help you study.	1351	3.49	0.72	90.8	1325	2.92	0.91	70.1
26. Learn how to prepare effectively for examinations .	1354	3.64	0.63	93.9	1327	2.74	0.93	61.2

27. Learn how to complete assignments successfully.	1353	3.64	0.64	94.0	1325	2.95	0.90	70.2
28. Learn how to take notes in class.	1348	3.58	0.67	92.4	1295	2.75	1.04	59.1
29. Develop effective strategies for time management.	1351	3.58	0.68	92.7	1324	2.92	0.92	69.2
30. Identify the requirements for your proposed plan of study or major.	1351	3.64	0.64	93.9	1311	2.94	0.97	68.3
Learn how to make full use of resources and services on campus which support your learning objectives:								
31. Know the purpose of and location of career counseling.	1342	3.27	0.78	84.7	1293	2.59	1.02	53.0
32. Know the purpose of and location of financial aid services.	1335	3.37	0.82	85.0	1276	2.76	1.08	59.4
33. Know the purpose of and location of the Bursar's office.	1342	3.34	0.81	84.5	1291	2.85	1.08	63.4
34. Know the purpose of and location of the Registrar.	1344	3.37	0.80	85.2	1301	2.82	1.07	61.5
35. Know how to use the Schedule of Classes to plan your academic program.	1353	3.59	0.65	92.5	1339	3.07	0.97	74.0
36. Know how to use the University College Manual and the Bulletin from the school you plan to enter to plan your academic program.	1334	3.39	0.77	86.3	1285	2.71	1.04	58.4

Table Two

	University College							
Learn about the culture and values of the college environment:								
1. Understand how the academic setting encourages an open exchange of ideas.	583	3.22	0.73	86.4	576	2.84	0.78	69.4
2. Develop a respect for cultural diversity among peers and others encountered on campus.	592	3.47	0.73	89.0	576	2.89	0.93	66.5
3. Understand the meaning of academic integrity and how it applies to issues such as plagiarism and copyright laws in the academic setting.	592	3.48	0.76	87.7	578	2.84	0.97	62.5
4. Understand how the IUPUI Principles of Undergraduate Education can be used by students to guide their course selection.	581	3.29	0.78	85.4	578	2.79	0.97	61.8
Make connections inside and outside the classroom with faculty, staff, and other students that will enable you to experience a safe, supportive, and positive learning environment on campus:								
5. Make use of the student learning center.	581	3.12	0.87	77.6	553	2.70	1.00	58.4
6. Broaden relationships with other students by participating in student organizations and co-curricular activities.	584	3.04	0.90	74.3	555	2.63	1.00	55.9
7. Establish a positive working relationship with your advisor	592	3.39	0.73	88.0	588	2.92	0.90	70.6
8. Communicate freely with faculty in the courses in which you are enrolled related to course work and academic planning as well as other concerns.	591	3.48	0.67	91.4	584	2.98	0.88	71.9
9. Develop a relationship with your peer mentor so that you feel free to go to him or her for advice and support.	574	3.06	0.90	75.4	539	2.65	1.02	56.8

Learn communication skills that will be needed throughout your college experience:								
10. Improve your ability to complete written assignments.	596	3.69	0.61	94.3	583	2.93	0.97	70.3
11. Improve your ability to participate in small group discussions.	594	3.40	0.76	87.4	580	3.06	0.89	75.2
12. Feel more comfortable participating in large group or class discussions.	589	3.42	0.78	87.8	575	2.94	0.95	69.9
13. Communicate with faculty, advisors, librarians and peer mentors about how to improve your written and verbal communication skills.	589	3.33	0.81	84.0	570	2.71	0.94	60.9
Use critical thinking skills to solve academic and personal problems:								
14. Learn how to approach academic problems and issues from multiple perspectives.	595	3.45	0.68	90.6	583	2.71	0.88	61.4
15. Use critical thinking skills to analyze complex concepts in a field or discipline.	587	3.36	0.72	87.6	572	2.67	0.90	57.0
16. Use critical thinking skills to analyze and solve problems you face in your personal life.	589	3.45	0.74	88.6	576	2.75	0.98	61.8
Develop a basic understanding of the fundamentals of scholarly inquiry and how to use the University Libraries as a resource for acquiring information:								
17. Define the functions of various library services.	592	3.24	0.79	82.6	574	2.59	0.99	52.6
18. Locate library services within the University Libraries.	591	3.39	0.75	86.6	575	2.83	0.98	63.3
19. Use the University Library to do research for class assignments.	591	3.52	0.71	90.4	576	2.84	0.97	64.8
20. Determine how to frame questions that will identify what information is needed to answer that question.	585	3.27	0.75	86.2	565	2.53	0.91	51.7
Learn about and use campus resources for information technology to support your academic work and campus connections:								
21. Know the location and hours available of campus computer facilities.	595	3.32	0.77	85.7	569	2.59	1.00	52.9
22. Communicate using e-mail.	589	3.51	0.72	89.6	578	3.18	1.00	75.8
23. Know how to use the Internet as a resource to support academic work.	592	3.61	0.62	94.8	585	3.09	0.97	73.0
24. Know about resources on campus for acquiring specific software skills needed for course work or major.	591	3.44	0.71	90.5	561	2.64	1.03	56.0
Learn about your abilities, study skills, and life demands so that you can develop and use these more effectively in pursuit of your academic goals:								
25. Understand your learning style and how knowing your learning style will help you study.	594	3.50	0.71	91.1	579	2.84	0.92	66.1
26. Learn how to prepare effectively for examinations .	595	3.64	0.64	93.8	583	2.65	0.92	57.5
27. Learn how to complete assignments successfully.	594	3.65	0.62	94.3	584	2.84	0.91	65.9
28. Learn how to take notes in class.	592	3.59	0.66	93.2	562	2.63	1.02	53.9
29. Develop effective strategies for time management.	596	3.61	0.66	92.8	583	2.92	0.89	69.6

30. Identify the requirements for your proposed plan of study or major.	595	3.66	0.62	94.8	575	2.86	1.00	65.9
Learn how to make full use of resources and services on campus which support your learning objectives:								
31. Know the purpose of and location of career counseling.	591	3.31	0.74	87.0	572	2.65	0.99	55.8
32. Know the purpose of and location of financial aid services.	580	3.41	0.80	85.9	558	2.77	1.06	60.2
33. Know the purpose of and location of the Bursar's office.	586	3.38	0.80	84.8	569	2.86	1.06	64.9
34. Know the purpose of and location of the Registrar.	588	3.40	0.79	86.2	570	2.84	1.06	62.5
35. Know how to use the Schedule of Classes to plan your academic program.	592	3.60	0.64	93.1	590	3.03	0.97	73.4
36. Know how to use the University College Manual and the Bulletin from the school you plan to enter to plan your academic program.	587	3.41	0.74	87.9	567	2.72	1.04	57.7

Table Three

Business

Learn about the culture and values of the college environment:								
1. Understand how the academic setting encourages an open exchange of ideas.	416	3.25	0.72	86.8	414	2.82	0.82	67.6
2. Develop a respect for cultural diversity among peers and others encountered on campus.	414	3.41	0.78	86.2	411	2.73	1.02	58.6
3. Understand the meaning of academic integrity and how it applies to issues such as plagiarism and copyright laws in the academic setting.	417	3.51	0.74	89.2	414	2.90	1.00	68.4
4. Understand how the IUPUI Principles of Undergraduate Education can be used by students to guide their course selection.	408	3.26	0.78	84.3	398	2.76	0.95	65.6
Make connections inside and outside the classroom with faculty, staff, and other students that will enable you to experience a safe, supportive, **and positive learning environment on campus:**								
5. Make use of the student learning center.	404	2.97	0.92	71.8	389	2.51	1.02	48.1
6. Broaden relationships with other students by participating in student organizations and co-curricular activities.	408	3.00	0.93	74.5	390	2.61	1.00	55.4
7. Establish a positive working relationship with your advisor	415	3.36	0.78	87.2	406	2.88	0.94	68.7
8. Communicate freely with faculty in the courses in which you are enrolled related to course work and academic planning as well as other concerns.	415	3.46	0.71	89.4	412	2.93	0.90	69.4
9. Develop a relationship with your peer mentor so that you feel free to go to him or her for advice and support.	399	3.06	0.90	76.4	380	2.69	1.07	59.2
Learn communication skills that will be needed throughout your college experience:								
10. Improve your ability to complete written assignments.	418	3.67	0.56	97.4	408	3.00	0.92	75.5
11. Improve your ability to participate in small group discussions.	418	3.48	0.71	89.5	414	3.14	0.88	76.1

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12. Feel more comfortable participating in large group or class discussions.	417	3.43	0.75	88.7	411	2.90	0.98	66.4
13. Communicate with faculty, advisors, librarians and peer mentors about how to improve your written and verbal communication skills.	415	3.25	0.79	83.1	399	2.69	0.95	58.9
Use critical thinking skills to solve academic and personal problems:								
14. Learn how to approach academic problems and issues from multiple perspectives.	414	3.43	0.70	91.3	408	2.77	0.89	64.5
15. Use critical thinking skills to analyze complex concepts in a field or discipline.	413	3.34	0.77	86.0	403	2.68	0.94	60.5
16. Use critical thinking skills to analyze and solve problems you face in your personal life.	412	3.43	0.75	89.6	399	2.75	1.00	61.2
Develop a basic understanding of the fundamentals of scholarly inquiry and how to use the University Libraries as a resource for acquiring information:								
17. Define the functions of various library services.	412	3.17	0.85	78.4	402	2.73	0.92	59.7
18. Locate library services within the University Libraries.	414	3.35	0.80	84.5	406	2.84	0.97	63.1
19. Use the University Library to do research for class assignments.	415	3.48	0.74	90.1	405	2.91	0.97	65.2
20. Determine how to frame questions that will identify what information is needed to answer that question.	411	3.29	0.77	87.1	406	2.66	0.92	56.9
Learn about and use campus resources for information technology to support your academic work and campus connections:								
21. Know the location and hours available of campus computer facilities.	413	3.23	0.84	79.9	405	2.82	1.05	63.0
22. Communicate using e-mail.	413	3.58	0.70	90.3	403	3.28	0.95	77.9
23. Know how to use the Internet as a resource to support academic work.	412	3.61	0.67	92.7	412	3.18	0.93	78.9
24. Know about resources on campus for acquiring specific software skills needed for course work or major.	415	3.45	0.74	88.9	405	2.82	0.97	62.2
Learn about your abilities, study skills, and life demands so that you can develop and use these more effectively in pursuit of your academic goals:								
25. Understand your learning style and how knowing your learning style will help you study.	414	3.45	0.74	89.4	410	3.03	0.91	74.4
26. Learn how to prepare effectively for examinations .	415	3.63	0.63	94.0	404	2.79	0.93	63.6
27. Learn how to complete assignments successfully.	415	3.61	0.66	92.8	403	3.03	0.89	72.7
28. Learn how to take notes in class.	413	3.56	0.70	91.3	400	2.84	1.04	62.3
29. Develop effective strategies for time management.	413	3.57	0.66	93.5	406	2.98	0.93	72.2
30. Identify the requirements for your proposed plan of study or major.	412	3.62	0.65	93.0	400	2.96	0.95	69.0
Learn how to make full use of resources and services on campus which support your learning objectives:								
31. Know the purpose of and location of career counseling.	410	3.23	0.78	84.1	393	2.49	1.04	47.6

32. Know the purpose of and location of financial aid services.	414	3.26	0.86	82.1	391	2.59	1.10	54.0
33. Know the purpose of and location of the Bursar's office.	412	3.27	0.84	82.5	396	2.69	1.08	57.1
34. Know the purpose of and location of the Registrar.	415	3.28	0.84	81.7	399	2.72	1.08	56.4
35. Know how to use the Schedule of Classes to plan your academic program.	415	3.54	0.69	90.6	410	3.07	1.01	72.2
36. Know how to use the University College Manual and the Bulletin from the school you plan to enter to plan your academic program.	408	3.34	0.82	82.8	394	2.64	1.07	55.6

Table Four

All Other Schools								
Learn about the culture and values of the college environment:								
1. Understand how the academic setting encourages an open exchange of ideas.	333	3.26	0.74	86.8	323	2.86	0.83	69.3
2. Develop a respect for cultural diversity among peers and others encountered on campus.	344	3.43	0.76	86.6	326	2.85	0.99	64.7
3. Understand the meaning of academic integrity and how it applies to issues such as plagiarism and copyright laws in the academic setting.	339	3.54	0.70	91.2	337	3.03	0.93	70.3
4. Understand how the IUPUI Principles of Undergraduate Education can be used by students to guide their course selection.	320	3.32	0.82	84.1	322	2.80	0.97	64.0
Make connections inside and outside the classroom with faculty, staff, and other students that will enable you to experience a safe, supportive,								
and positive learning environment on campus:								
5. Make use of the student learning center.	334	3.07	0.86	75.4	315	2.73	0.99	60.0
6. Broaden relationships with other students by participating in student organizations and co-curricular activities.	333	2.95	0.92	70.6	307	2.44	1.00	46.3
7. Establish a positive working relationship with your advisor	342	3.38	0.83	85.4	333	2.81	1.04	61.3
8. Communicate freely with faculty in the courses in which you are enrolled related to course work and academic planning as well as other concerns.	342	3.46	0.72	89.8	339	2.95	0.93	71.4
9. Develop a relationship with your peer mentor so that you feel free to go to him or her for advice and support.	319	2.99	0.93	70.8	290	2.48	1.08	48.6
Learn communication skills that will be needed throughout your college experience:								
10. Improve your ability to complete written assignments.	345	3.61	0.63	94.2	337	3.00	0.91	73.3
11. Improve your ability to participate in small group discussions.	341	3.37	0.79	85.9	335	2.99	0.91	71.3
12. Feel more comfortable participating in large group or class discussions.	342	3.35	0.84	84.2	335	2.86	0.95	66.6

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13. Communicate with faculty, advisors, librarians and peer mentors about how to improve your written and verbal communication skills.	338	3.30	0.86	82.2	325	2.64	0.96	53.8
Use critical thinking skills to solve academic and personal problems:								
14. Learn how to approach academic problems and issues from multiple perspectives.	344	3.39	0.74	89.2	337	2.71	0.91	61.4
15. Use critical thinking skills to analyze complex concepts in a field or discipline.	344	3.39	0.77	87.8	336	2.71	0.93	60.7
16. Use critical thinking skills to analyze and solve problems you face in your personal life.	344	3.40	0.77	89.0	332	2.73	0.95	62.7
Develop a basic understanding of the fundamentals of scholarly inquiry and how to use the University Libraries as a resource for acquiring information:								
17. Define the functions of various library services.	342	3.25	0.84	81.6	336	2.88	0.99	65.2
18. Locate library services within the University Libraries.	343	3.35	0.78	87.8	339	2.96	0.97	70.2
19. Use the University Library to do research for class assignments.	343	3.51	0.72	91.0	343	3.04	0.97	73.5
20. Determine how to frame questions that will identify what information is needed to answer that question.	338	3.33	0.79	85.8	329	2.75	0.93	60.5
Learn about and use campus resources for information technology to support your academic work and campus connections:								
21. Know the location and hours available of campus computer facilities.	340	3.32	0.83	83.8	327	2.76	1.00	58.1
22. Communicate using e-mail.	341	3.48	0.77	88.3	331	3.27	0.97	79.5
23. Know how to use the Internet as a resource to support academic work.	343	3.64	0.64	93.6	334	3.30	0.86	82.6
24. Know about resources on campus for acquiring specific software skills needed for course work or major.	336	3.43	0.79	87.8	319	2.76	1.02	57.4
Learn about your abilities, study skills, and life demands so that you can develop and use these more effectively in pursuit of your academic goals:								
25. Understand your learning style and how knowing your learning style will help you study.	343	3.53	0.69	92.1	336	2.93	0.90	71.7
26. Learn how to prepare effectively for examinations .	344	3.65	0.64	94.2	340	2.82	0.93	64.7
27. Learn how to complete assignments successfully.	344	3.66	0.65	95.1	338	3.04	0.86	74.6
28. Learn how to take notes in class.	343	3.57	0.68	92.4	333	2.87	1.03	64.0
29. Develop effective strategies for time management.	342	3.56	0.73	91.5	335	2.87	0.95	64.8
30. Identify the requirements for your proposed plan of study or major.	344	3.65	0.66	93.6	336	3.06	0.95	71.7
Learn how to make full use of resources and services on campus which support your learning objectives:								
31. Know the purpose of and location of career counseling.	341	3.26	0.85	81.5	328	2.63	1.06	54.6
32. Know the purpose of and location of financial aid services.	341	3.42	0.79	87.1	327	2.94	1.06	64.5
33. Know the purpose of and location of the Bursar's office.	344	3.37	0.80	86.3	326	3.01	1.06	68.7

34. Know the purpose of and location of the Registrar.	341	3.42	0.75	87.7	332	2.92	1.08	66.0
35. Know how to use the Schedule of Classes to plan your academic program.	346	3.63	0.62	93.9	339	3.15	0.93	77.3
36. Know how to use the University College Manual and the Bulletin from the school you plan to enter to plan your academic program.	339	3.43	0.76	87.6	324	2.80	1.00	63.3

DISCUSSION

All students reported that they had gained much knowledge about the learning outcomes found in the template of the first year seminars. For all of the 36 items but three, at least 80% of students choose "four," indicating that they had "learned a great deal about," or "three," indicating that they had "learned a fair amount about" the content described in that item. The range of scores on the three items that failed to achieve an 80% score was between 75.6% and 73.4% for the total sample. The data reporting sub samples of the entire group, students enrolled in first year students taught by University College, those taught by the Kelly School of Business and all other sections taught by individual schools indicated similar results.

Scores on the importance scale were significantly lower. The number of students choosing "four" indicating "very important," and "three," indicating "moderately important," for the total group was between 77.4% and 53.0%. Individual items chosen by 70% of students or more were under the communication skills that will be needed throughout your college career learning outcome, specifically improvement in completing written assignments and working in small groups and items under the information technology to support your academic work and campus connections learning outcome, specifically using e-mail and the Internet. Also rated as most important were knowing how to use the schedule of classes to plan your academic program, and understanding your learning style and how knowing your learning style will help you study, as well as learning how to complete assignments successfully. Some variations can be seen in the sub samples (see tables above). Items seen as less important by the total group come from almost all the eight learning outcomes. Items seen as less important do vary somewhat in sub samples (student in the business sections see career counseling as less important than other sub sets of students) but the difference in percentages are small.

It would appear from the data reported above that the learning outcomes in the template for first year seminars are seen by students as appropriate and are being taught well across campus. Data from instructional team member, analysis of the syllabi, and information collected in the qualitative study underway which will be conducted with students after completion of their first semester in college or beyond will need to be examined before any recommendations can be made about changes in the template.

Reference

Ewell, P. T. (1997), Identifying indicators of curricular quality, In J. G. Gaff, J. L. Ratcliff and Associates Ed.), Handbook of the Undergraduate Curriculum, (pp. 608-626), San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Learning Communities and the Pedagogy of Critical Readings and Critical Writings

Dr. Kevin C. Robbins[1]

Abstract: At a complex urban university, successful integration of new students into the total university learning environment requires modes of instruction through which students become aware simultaneously of the multiple skills implied by "critical readings" and "critical writings." The first year learning community course is an ideal venue in which to develop student awareness of the fact that academic success is predicated upon the student's capacity to read and to write in new, multiple, and critical ways. Faculty engaged in this course of instruction may also benefit professionally from the development of new curricula testing the dimensions of what it means to read and to write both within and beyond the confines of any one academic discipline. This essay offers examples of effective exercises in the first year learning community alerting students to the plurality of readings and writings critical to their college success and identifies how those exercises may also serve to build and improve learning communities for students, staff, and faculty over time.

A Note to the Reader On the Practical Origins and Context of this Essay

Findings and recommendations presented in this essay derive from the author's three years of experience in team-teaching a one credit hour first year learning community for incoming students at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. Over the period 1997-1999, the author team-taught a total of six learning communities with the active assistance of a student mentor, a staff counselor from University College, and a professional staff librarian. These learning communities were directly linked to the author's standard 3 credit-hour introductory ancient or modern Western Civilization courses. Assigned readings in these learning communities included selected chapters of a standard textbook designed for first year seminars (Gardner and Jewler's, *Your College Experience: Strategies for Success*, full 3rd ed., see list of references attached), a single-author trade paperback on college student success (see description below), and a sequence of customized reading and writing assignments this essay will describe. These special exercises were supplemented by weekly student completion of workbook assignments taken from key Gardner and Jewler chapters on time management, note taking, textbook reading, essay exam preparation, and university library research methods.

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The teaching team's evaluations of the learning community's curriculum effectiveness were regularly supplemented by official student evaluations of the course conducted by the staff of University College and through personal entry and exit interviews conducted by the author with all registered learning community students at the beginning and end of each academic semester. A total of 62 students completed both entry and exit interviews. The author has obtained further validations of his learning community's effectiveness as a skills-based course of instruction from comparisons of standard student numerical course evaluations for all learning communities gathered by University College staff in the fall semester of 1998 and the spring semester of 1999.

I. Introduction

A growing number of studies investigating the demands modern university curricula place on the development of students as successful seekers, synthesizers, learners, and makers of knowledge concur that this process now requires student practice and mastery of multiple or parallel literacies (Pugh, *et. al.*, 2000). While university faculty still employ conventional lectures, textbooks, monographs, journal articles, written essays and exams as essential tools for the communication and validation of knowledge, the rapidly expanding universe of electronic networks and channel new pedagogies and modes of learning to which students must gain confident access and with which successful students must also keep up both as critical readers and as critical writers. The institution of first year learning communities attuned to the multiple conventional and novel literacies college students must now master offer one way of restructuring university curricula for greater urban student success.

Williams and Snipper (1990) have defined academic literacy as

> The ability to process and interact with a body of artifacts and ideas preserved within the specific domains of educational institutions. It is a set of behaviors peculiar to the formally educated. Academic literacy reflects the notion that literate people are those who read literature, philosophy, history, and contemporary essays, the very sort of texts college students face during their first two years of undergraduate work. It reflects the notion that they can also write about these texts in some fashion. And it reflects the notion that they can comprehend such texts within the larger context of Western cultural traditions. (p. 8)

Crucial here is the simultaneous emphasis that falls on reading and writing as the central manifestations of academic literacy. Also important here is the implied continuum of apprehension via concerted reading and writing leading students from the recognition of simple, discrete facts toward perception and critique of ideas and the correlation of such ideas or theories within broader systems or traditions of thought and expression. This is the path of learning upon which we want increasingly skillful, perceptive, and self-aware university matriculants to embark. Restructuring university curricula to give incoming students from the moment of their arrival on campus clear ideas of what practical behaviors they must adopt to become critical readers and writers strikes me as the best possible agenda especially for first year success seminars and key introductory courses.

Such a restructuring should gain momentum given the superabundance of information and information technologies now confronting students on college and university campuses. Consider for a moment the ordinary tasks of decoding and communication the average incoming student on a large urban university campus faces daily. These can include: following detailed instructions for registration; completing various financial aid documents; activating personal campus e-mail accounts and accessing online course guides and departmental web pages; interpreting correctly in hard copy or online descriptions of academic programs; reading through in hard copy or online course syllabi of various lengths and complexities; interpreting the lectures, oral instructions, blackboard notations and diagrams, and comments of professors; confronting simultaneous reading assignments in several assigned textbooks; accessing an online database or e-journal recommended by an instructor; preparing an essay on a course document in which the instructor seeks the student's own opinions

II The Reading(s) and Writing(s) Universities Demand: Preparing for Student Success Across Curricula.

How can a team-taught first year learning community aid incoming students to immerse themselves in this global field of instruction requiring confident student assimilation and assertion of information via different media? The first step is for the instructional team to conceptualize the learning community as a class imparting the basic and fundamental academic skills of critical reading, critical writing, and critical interpretation to all participants. Unfortunately, the organization and content of most textbooks designed for first year seminars and learning communities do attempt to achieve over-extended goals. Such texts, even in abridged editions, come complete with chapter sections on campus diversity, mental health, psychological profiles, interpersonal relationships, date rape, substance abuse, personal finances, and career choices. In my experience, students find these readings and the workbook exercises accompanying them to be terribly dull, superficial, uninformative, unhelpful, and entirely extraneous to the real challenges to success they face in school. The alternative is to orient the learning community toward introduction, description, and repeated student practice of fundamental analytical and interpretive skills in readings and writings essential for academic success on campuses full of streaming, interactive, and interdependent texts and media.

The second step in the reorientation of learning communities for *student* success is then for the team to ask: in how many ways must successful students read and write on campus? The answers here are various and progressively more demanding in terms of student preparation and practice. We read and write campus publications for the simple apprehension of facts. This type of reading and writing, for the facts and nothing but the facts, strikes me as a common paradigm in students' minds into which all the various arts of reading and writing are mistakenly compressed. Such a straightforward conduct of reading and writing is only a basis, not a substitute, for the interpretative intellectual work successful college students must attain and demonstrate.

We also read and write to organize, assess, compare, synthesize, connect, derive, and discover important factual information explicitly or implicitly contained in data previously assembled. This is a simple form of "critical" reading and writing implying the necessity of student distinctions between the utility and connectedness of information presented. We can then read and write to demonstrate personal apprenticeship and increasing facility in following directions for the orderly presentation of what we know, have derived, or postulate to others.

We also read and write for deeper critical analysis of other readers' and writers' overt and covert methods, motives, intentions, details, strengths, and weaknesses of argument. This is a more complex form of critical reading and critical writing informed by growing student awareness that accepting or believing everything you read is a bad idea. Many incoming students have yet to reach or have just barely reached this stage of textual consciousness.

From the outset of their university education, students must be reminded and assured that reading and writing better as critical thinkers mean rereading and rewriting always.

Ultimately, we read and write to transcend ourselves and to establish enriching, intensely pleasurable dialogs with other readers and writers, living and dead, whose interests and passions converge with ours in bodies of knowledge without which our collective existence and mutual understanding would feel immeasurably weaker and impoverished.

However, the recognition of the multiple readings and writings on campus as processes of introspection and self-emancipation does not entail that the learning community must address each and every type or level of decoding and encoding information. The third step then is for the learning community teaching team to devise a sequence of practical and progressively more demanding exercises enabling students to recognize, adopt, and practice those core, early skills of critical readings and writings upon which they can subsequently build as they become the more incisive readers and writers in other courses, the more skeptical and insightful critical thinkers first year programs seek to foster in all classrooms. Ideally, this curriculum design should aim at integrating as closely as possible learning community assignments with graded course work in the linked, standard university introductory class to which the learning community is best attached.

III Effective Exercises in the Learning Community Demonstrating What Critical Reading(s) And Writing(s) Mean for Student Success

1. The Fact Sheet

An emphasis on the *parallel* literacies successful college students must acquire rightly implies that they aim to practice *simultaneously* and *interchangeably* the various types of readings and writings outlined above. To prepare incoming students for the progressive acquisition of these multiple interpretative talents requires simple exercises, feasible in class time, that make the tactics and expected outcomes of different readings and writings clear. A good place to begin on the first day of class is with a fact sheet tied to thorough student comprehension of the learning community's course syllabus. Rather than distributing the syllabus and then personally reading through it noting key points to a passive class (too much like high school), the instructor should give a copy of the syllabus to each student accompanied by a blank page headed "Fact Sheet." Immediately dividing the students into small groups, the teaching team should then request that each group member take a portion of the syllabus and isolate from it the key facts relating to course meeting location, meeting times, organization, weekly readings, requirements, grading policies, assignment due dates, subjects covered, and examination dates, times, and locations. Once fact checking has been completed, group members should synthesize and compare their sheets and the instruction team should query each group on what precisely it believes the salient facts of the course to be. Groups should be questioned in turn and any differences in facts isolated should be noted and discussed. This procedure has the advantage of immediately requiring students to read for facts, raises the possibility that different readers will miss, isolate or interpret "facts" differently, and gives all participants in the community an immediately opportunity to learn as fully as possible what the course is about, how it is organized, and what its schedules are. A useful and practical follow up exercise for the first homework is to require all students to obtain a day-by-day planner for the entire semester and to transcribe into that planner all the key facts found together in the syllabus regarding specific weekly assignments and the precise due dates of all class exercises.

2. Online Exercises

It is essential that all learning community students recognize, from the very first day of class, that their success in college and their complete integration into the global campus learning environment requires regular, novel, critical, and increasingly sophisticated use of electronic media of instruction and inquiry such as e-mail and the World Wide Web. The first year learning community in an excellent venue in which to reiterate this message, especially for that still important proportion of incoming students who are "technophobes" with little or no knowledge of computer use. To promote greater student media literacies in the learning community, all students are required to have a fully activated campus e-mail account by the second class meeting. This meeting is normally held in an on-campus computer instruction classroom where all students have a complete computer system in front of them. Frequently, the staff librarian on the learning community teaching team leads this session, demonstrating to the entire class, how to access the campus e-mail system, how to read mail, send mail, edit mail, etc. At this session, all learning community students are also required to subscribe themselves to the learning community listserv maintained for their class. Students are told that this subscription is essential because several subsequent and important learning community class assignments will only be distributed to the class electronically via the listserv. No hard copies of these assignments will be distributed under any circumstances. This stipulation normally assures near uniform student compliance with the requirement. To supplement student experience of e-mail use, a new homework assignment is given requiring each student to post to the listserv before the next class meeting a message describing one "fact" that he or she formerly believed to be true about universities that he or she now recognizes to be false. Students are then required to describe in the message the process of inquiry or information by which they came to recognize the error. This exercise not only habituates students to check and read through their e-mails (a large volume of messages comes in to each student's e-mail box), but also reiterates the various paths to improved understanding critical thinking can take. Via this exercise students are also encouraged to see themselves as already capable of working as critical thinkers using the university itself as the object of their critique.

To round out initial learning community instruction in campus electronic media, the third class session is normally devoted to introduction and monitored student use of the World Wide Web. Essential here is instruction navigating the students through the university library's home page and emphasis on the vast number of online resources (especially full library catalogues, search engines, e-journals, and databases) electronically linked to that page. This class concludes with all students accessing the class web page for their linked Western Civilization course. Emphasis here falls on showing students the large number of supplementary web sites linked to the Western Civ. class home page, including sites maintained by libraries, universities, and museums around the world. The staff librarian then directs students to a number of private web pages he has found maintained by individuals on the net. These sites contain either comically fabricated information or spurious, unverifiable "information." Students are instructed to note the form of the personal web page addresses (URLs) and reminded to read their screens for such details when seeking to evaluate the accuracy or trustworthiness of information conveyed via the web. To advocate total student skepticism and close critical reading of web-based information (especially as relevant to themes treated in the linked Western Civilization courses), the instructor frequently concludes this session of the class by directing students to an elaborate web page maintained by an American neo-Nazi organization whose members deny the reality of the Holocaust. This example usually suffices to remind students of the absolute necessity of approaching all web based information from a critical and questioning perspective. Homework required from this session of the learning community asks students to find five resources related to a key word of theme relevant to the curriculum of the linked Western Civilization class.

3. The Precis

Critical readers and critical writers need to gain experience at synthesizing and making useful synopses of information contained in a wide variety of texts presented in hard copy or online.

Simultaneous progress on these densely interconnected tasks can be made via a learning community assignment that requires students, working individually or in groups, to read through and make a precis of some official university document setting forth the operations or rationale of some campus institution, program or major. At IUPUI, I have profitably used the mission statement devised for University College itself, a text justifying the need for learning communities and their purposes on campus, as the source document for this exercise. Students in class are requested to read through all or part of this document and to write down in a sequence of single sentences or phrases a concise summary of what they believe to be the most important features or objectives of the campus institution. This exercise not only gives students the opportunity to practice the skills of critical, detail-oriented, synoptic reading and writing, but can also improve their general knowledge of the university campus, its bureaucratic dimensions, pedagogical objectives, and modes of discourse.

4. Outlining and "Revisioning" Exercises for Critical Writers

Incoming university students ill-prepared in secondary school for the rigors of paper writing and personal written expression must quickly be taught that the ability to write effectively, efficiently, and critically. The learning community teaching team should work concertedly to remind students that the class objective is for all participants to become better writers, not great or master writers. Frank admissions by the faculty team member that he or she is still constantly working on improving his or her writing and faces the professional necessity of consistently critical internal and external reviews of his or her own written work helps models the academic writer and helps students to understand a little more about the university learning world and why most faculty members are writers persistently seeking to refine their argumentative and interpretative prose. Central to this endeavor is communication of the fact that the better writer is the better organized writer and that the simplest of preparatory steps toward writing can pay big dividends in terms of efficient and effective composition.

The place to begin is with outlines, a form of writing preparation with which most incoming students are already familiar. The key is to get students making multiple outlines of their essay assignments in timely fashion and before, not after, they have written their papers. A learning community linked to another key introductory university course (like Western Civilization) in which significant amounts of written work are required offers excellent opportunities for concerted work improving student writers via outlining. One possibility here is to remind learning community students frequently of impending deadlines for essay exams and essays in the linked course. Ideally, both prior essay exam questions and current paper topics should be used in the learning community to provide a practical and clearly beneficial grounding for student instruction in outlining and revising their preparations for written work.

Learning community class time is then spent in the weeks prior to all exams and required papers in the linked course with students making increasingly refined and elaborate outlines of effective responses to the exam questions or essay topics. Group work should come first with students reading over the questions/topics in close detail so that they come to see what the questions/topics are asking them precisely to do. Each student group should then draft a preliminary outline of how a response to one question/topic should be structured, this helps students to see that multiple paths of argument can be followed leading to a good paper. This process also encourages students to rethink and to re-envision the form and content of their own exams and essays and to regard such revisions as common, indeed essential to effective academic writing. One group should then place their joint outline on the blackboard and the entire learning community should be questioned on what the students believe to be the strengths and weaknesses of the displayed outline. Group outlines and suppositions on these points should then be confronted and refined, resulting in a clear, communal outline made on the blackboard that addresses each of the key points or queries in one or two of the questions/topics under scrutiny. The key objective here is to provide each student in attendance with a simple, reliable model outline of the question/topic by the end of this learning community class session.

Students should be instructed to keep multiple copies of their outlines and to bring them to subsequent learning community class sessions for additional refinement. This process of refinement in multiple outlines and sustained preparation for essay exams and paper assignments can be greatly reinforced if the faculty member also requires all students in the linked course to schedule paper conferences during which their preparations for writing can be checked and critiqued by the instructor. Faculty who often bemoan the poor writing skills of incoming students but then do little to improve those skills in their own courses should be encouraged to participate in learning communities restructured and focused to enhance students' basic abilities in preparation and conduct of written expression.

5. The "Mystery Document" Exercise and Detective Critical Readings and Writings.

Regardless of the medium they employ, how students read is just as important as what students read. Within the university learning community, the ultimate objective is enhancement of students' confidence as critical readers so that they feel themselves highly confident in drawing inferences from written sources, in formulating suppositions about authorial identity, modes of argument, and intent, and in detecting subtle interconnections between specific readings or entire bodies of knowledge those readings exemplify.

One type of simple, introductory exercise appropriate to nurture critical, interpretative readers is the "mystery document." This can be any piece of argumentative text presented to the students in hard or electronic copy that is devoid of all explicit indications of the author's identity, era of publication, type, use, purpose, audience, and effects on readers anticipated by the author. (In my own learning community teaching I regularly employ mystery documents drawn from materials germane to the periods or themes being covered concurrently in the linked Western Civilization course--again to remind learning community students of the utility of their community work for mastery of prime academic skills applicable to other class assignments in almost any field.) After dividing learning community students into groups, the teaching team distributes the mystery document accompanied by a fact sheet inviting students to surmise what type of document they are dealing with, what the document is about, who the author might be, and what purposes, explicit and implicit, the document might serve. Group responses are compared and critiqued by the entire class with a common, preliminary set of hypotheses and tentative conclusions drawn up about the document and its author. Learning community students then receive additional questions about the document only via the class e-mail listserv for a homework assignment and short essay due on the document complete with required essay outline. These questions ask what the student believes to be the primary and subsidiary subjects of the document. They ask the student to imagine what the author hopes to achieve by writing the document. They require the student to examine the types of argument and rhetorical devices the author employs, paying special attention to the exact terms and turns of phrase the author uses to advance his argument and to persuade the reader. And, finally, the student is asked to state his or her most well reasoned inferences about the status and identity of the author, noting the interests of the author served by the content and style of the document under analysis. Such detective reading work has proven strongly appealing to students and their level of comfort with the expression of their own opinions and interpretations is enhanced as they witness civil sharing and comparison of very differing suppositions in class and then work to refine their own interpretations through the essay assignment.

6. Exercises in Graphic and Cartographic Interpretation for Critical Readers and Writers.

A useful complement to various mystery document assignments is a similar exercise confronting students with an object like a complex map, chart, or graph accessed in print or electronic media. The students are directed to this graphical source material accompanied by a list of specific questions drawn up to compel close, comparative and interpretative student readings of the information presented in different visual formats. A selection such as a highly detailed map from a historical atlas combining illustrations of geography, climate, state borders, regions of specific agricultural or economic production, trade routes, travel times, diplomatic and geo-political alliances, etc. makes an ideal source for this exercise. The objective here is to heighten students' confidence in their ability to comprehend and interpret the types of multimedia artifacts modern, global electronic communications media can transmit. The key goal is to get students thinking analytically in multiple dimensions off the page or screen. Graphical materials from the fields of science, economics, business, and any of the social sciences could easily be appropriated for use in this critical graphical readings exercise.

7. Book Reviews for Mastering and Remembering the Skills of Successful College Students.

The book review is another format of written expression of which incoming university students have some prior knowledge. The learning community teaching team can capitalize on this familiarity by developing one or more review assignments that focus, for example, on the short, single-author texts that describe the campus learning environment and point out the adaptive habits of successful college students. One excellent example of this genre is Joshua Halberstam's *Acing College* (see appended list of references). The advantage here is that Halberstam is a college professor who writes to students in a direct and common sense manner giving the reader a faculty member's perspective on simple rules and habits that improve student academic performance. In contrast to typical student disgust with the standard textbooks many learning communities employ, my learning community students have expressed nearly unanimous praise for Halberstam, finding the text especially helpful in giving them a faculty member's view of academic life and helping them both to understand better what faculty do and to appreciate that most faculty sincerely wish to aid their students in becoming better learners by becoming better readers and writers. The recent proliferation of published memoirs by faculty members, especially from a maturing generation of female and minority scholars, may provide excellent additional sources.

The teaching team has found that a book review exercise, focused on a text like Halberstam's, works well towards the end of the term as a summation and reminder to the class of how successful students comport themselves and of the analytical and interpretative skills they have been practicing since enrollment. To structure this exercise, assignment guidelines invite students to identify the primary and several subsidiary purposes for which the author designed the text, require students to list in the order of importance to them their choice of the five most useful tips for student academic success Halberstam communicates and to explain why these choices were made, and to evaluate what aspects of the text are most applicable and least applicable to the university learning environment at IUPUI. Students are reminded by the team that the exercise invites not merely a synopsis of the text under review but rather the reviewer's opinions about the key structures and most useful aspects of the book.

8. The Well-Argued, Interpretative, and Opinionated Essay.

While the current structure and time constraints of my learning community do not allow for students to compose a major paper in that class on topics of their own, the linkage of the community to my standard Western Civilization classes, in which such a major paper is required toward the end of the semester, allows for important synergies in skills instruction to develop between both linked courses. In this context, the well-argued, interpretative, and opinionated student essay is construed and presented to students as a goal toward which we all work rather than as a mere assignment to be accomplished by each student laboring alone. To enhance the collaborative nature of the endeavor, learning community students are given the opportunity to meet with the teaching team librarian in order to go over their personal strategies of library and online research prior to paper composition. Learning community students are also encouraged to discuss their paper topic choices and paper preparation work with the teaching team student mentor for direct peer review of the writers' progress. The teaching team works concertedly to assure students that the expression of the students' own opinions is valued and, indeed, appreciated to be essential, as they become members of the academic world on campus. Learning community time spent on the arts of paper preparation encourages students to view the final paper as their opportunity for their own idiosyncratic but rigorous analysis of another person's opinions, motives, and qualities of argument. Via this process, even first year students can achieve a fuller comprehension of what academic discourse is about: the interplay of opinions in readings and writings that follow carefully essential rules of engagement.

IV Validation of Pedagogical Strategies in Critical Readings and Writings Through Student Evaluations of Learning Community Teaching at IUPUI.

The mission statement for IUPUI's University College asserts that the organization's prime intent is "to raise educational achievement and intellectual aspirations in Indianapolis, the state, and beyond." This mission is undertaken also to improve the IUPUI campus community in three crucial and related areas: enhancement of first year student retention rates and overall student graduation rates; attracting higher percentages of well qualified students to enroll in IUPUI's departments and schools; and enlargement of the student preparatory and developmental programs on campus to conduct more fully the training of matriculated students for future academic success. Institution of University College's first year success seminars presented by teaching teams in learning community format has become the instructional centerpiece of this initiative.

University College staff have taken the lead in developing batteries of learning community numerical and written evaluations through which participating students can assess the quality and utility of the instruction offered in the success seminars. Given the mission statement objectives of the program, perhaps the single most important measure in students' numerical evaluations of learning community instruction is their degree of assent to the statement: "This class helped me to develop coping, problem-solving, and survival skills appropriate for the university context." Certainly, in terms of effective student participation in meeting the goals of University College and its learning communities for improved retention and matriculants' enhanced intellectual performance, this is the most vital measure of the program's worth. However, integral, I believe, to the level of students' conviction here are their degrees of assent to two closely related points of inquiry on the evaluation form: "This course gave me a good introduction to university expectations for writing," and "This course gave me a good introduction for university expectations for reading." After all, effective critical reading and writing constitute the core skills successful university students must master to progress successfully and confidently through college curricula in which the sheer volume of textual and graphical information to be assimilated, critiqued, understood, and manipulated is increasing exponentially.

Aggregate student numerical evaluation data for all learning communities run on the IUPUI campus during the fall semester of 1998 and the spring semester of 1999 show the fairly positive results of learning community instruction over all. To the statement "This course helped me to develop coping, problem-solving, and survival skills appropriate for the university context," on average, 63% of all students enrolled in communities responded affirmatively. However, in my learning communities organized for instruction in critical readings and writings as described above, on average over 83% of students enrolled during these semesters strongly agreed that the class had imparted to them essential academic survival skills. And whereas, on average, only 52% of all students enrolled in learning communities those semesters agreed that their community had given them a good introduction to university expectations for writing, 93% of the surveyed enrollees in my sections strongly affirmed that they had gained such knowledge. And, when asked whether their learning community work had given them a good introduction to university expectations for reading, on average 56% of all students in learning communities those semesters responded positively. In my communities geared toward practice and mastery of critical reading, on average 82% of all students were convinced that they had gained a better introduction to the multiple reading skills university curricula demand.

In their written evaluations of their learning communities, my students also highly praised the utility of close syllabi reading, associated semester time management, the repeated outline exercises, mystery document analyses, and critical book review. Representative student comments include:

> "I found out here how to make a good outline and I am not scared to write anymore. I am glad I took this course and hope to succeed in college due to the writing techniques found here."
>
> "The practice outlines were the most valuable part of the course. I learned how to make a good outline in this class which has made it easier for me to write better papers in all other courses."
>
> "In class the thing that was most helpful was learning how to write and to outline a paper well. I did not learn any good ways to do these things in high school."
>
> "I liked reading through the mystery documents…the process helped me to understand and to prepare my other course assignments thoroughly."

From the qualitative and comparative quantitative data presented above I conclude that my learning community students' significantly higher cognizance of university standards for reading and writing largely account for their greater confidence in their own academic survival skills. This supposition is borne out by a concluding point of student numerical evaluation for learning communities. When asked whether their work in the communities would make them more likely to succeed in college, on average 54% of all students enrolled in all fall '98 and spring '99 learning communities at IUPUI believed this to be true. However, after participation in my learning communities during the same semesters, 78% of all students who completed the courses felt more likely to do well and had higher expectations of their own future success in university courses. Exit interviews amply confirm this higher student confidence and morale as college-level learners. Tentative data on student retention bear out the value of this heightened student confidence. Re-enrollment rates for veterans of the team-taught learning communities in which I worked are running well ahead of retention rates for students without access to first year communities and compare favorably to re-enrollment rates for students trained in other learning communities held concurrently. Thus this early but clear evidence from IUPUI's University College suggests that restructuring first year courses and learning communities to make critical readings and critical writings the prime foci of instruction can significantly enhance incoming students' confidence and ability to succeed in urban higher education.

V. Conclusions

The utility of first year or freshmen experience seminars for improved incoming student performance is now generally recognized on college and university campuses in the U.S. The learning community format for presentation of such courses has been preferred at IUPUI with generally beneficial results in terms of student confidence levels and retention. Work now needs to be done on refining the curricula of these first year courses so as to maximize student success and satisfaction with the usefulness and value of the lessons for academic development these courses try to impart. Recent experience at IUPUI suggests that refocusing first year learning communities on such absolutely essential core academic skills as critical readings and critical writings can significantly improve incoming students' level of confidence in their own analytical abilities and clear capacities to succeed in future university courses. The effective exercises outlined above for communicating to students what critical readings and critical writings mean offer one way of accomplishing this restructuring. And while these exercises have been developed and refined in the context of a learning community linked to a standard university introductory course on Western Civilization, the sources, strategies, and objectives of instruction these exercises make clear can easily be adapted to enhance student learning in other types of incoming, first year or freshmen classes designed to improve student retention and academic success in other fields and on other campuses. It is also possible that restructuring first year curricula to enhance student performance in the core academic disciplines and literacies of critical reading and writing will galvanize full-time faculty commitment to active participation in learning community instruction promoting those fundamental skills upon which all scholars rely to advance their own work.

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Introduction to the Temple University RUSS Essays

Jodi Levine

It was a pleasure to serve as the RUSS editor for the essays contributed by my Temple University colleagues. I greatly appreciate the time and effort my colleagues invested in the pieces published in this section of the volume. I am particularly grateful for the assistance of Temple doctoral student Kathryn Zervos, my RUSS editorial assistant.

As a collection, the Temple essays represent a blend of personal reflection, narrative, evidence of successes and challenges, and recommendations. The essays offer a realistic picture of what we face in our work to improve teaching and learning for our students, particularly entering freshmen. Individually, these essays offer either testimony of the experiences Temple faculty, administrators, staff, and graduate students have had in learning communities (Busocker; Goldblatt et al; Shorr and Parks; Tompkins) or with RUSS (Albertine) or visions of how we might expand the concept and structure of community at our institution (Shorr and Parks; Williams).

The writing is refreshingly open and honest. There are real lessons to be learned in reading these pieces. The first is that creating communities of teachers and learners is a time consuming task that demands great commitment and a substantial investment of energy from all those involved. Second, the reflections of faculty who have taught in learning communities are an important resource for individuals preparing to teach in the program for the first time. Several of the essays vividly detail some of the frustrations faculty experienced teaching in the program, but there is a great deal to be learned from the trials, tribulations, and near misses of those who have "walked the walk." The essays and/or themes from across the essays will be woven throughout our Learning Communities faculty development activities.

Finally, reflective writing is a valuable assessment tool. In some ways I have learned more about the impact of RUSS and Learning Communities on the lives and careers of my colleagues from these essays than I ever could have ascertained from surveys or interviews.

Of Firmament and Fin

Susan Albertine
Temple University

> *I smile when you suggest that I delay "to publish"— that being foreign to my thought, as firmament to fin.*
>
> Emily Dickinson to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, June 7, 1862

ABSTRACT: The future of undergraduate education in public institutions may depend on creative and thoughtful boundary crossing and networking, of the kind encouraged by the RUSS project.

Teaching a graduate seminar on Emily Dickinson this semester, while fulfilling my responsibilities as vice provost for undergraduate studies at a large urban public university, I sometimes feel as if I am moving between worlds, as foreign to each other as firmament to fin— to borrow a phrase from Dickinson, her way of expressing a complex and ambiguous regard for publication and the world of print culture. The jarring experience of movement between worlds, the strangeness of it and the conflicted and disrupted commerce one witnesses in the attempt, is certainly apparent. Yet some fish do fly and some birds swim, as Dickinson's poetry also tells us. The experience need not be irremediably foreign.

One's experience, that is, in the movement between worlds may be useful and instructive, conducive of work, which sometimes may be art and sometimes more mundane though enduring

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forms of achievement. The experience of being faculty/administrator may position one to value that hybrid state and to seek opportunities from it, opportunities for collaboration between faculty and administration. It appears to me that the need for such endeavor is more pressing now than it has been. There is more at stake now than in the decades immediately past. More now than in the expansive period of higher education that followed the second World War, we are facing upheaval and change. How, in this increasingly volatile and fragmented world, do we foster the degree and kind of collaboration and interdependence that our continued existence demands?

One way, it seems to me, is to find the means of networking, collaboration and consortia-building beyond anything we have done before. A comprehensive project, one that brings faculty and administrators together within and across institutions to address serious matters of restructuring can help instrumentally under conditions such as we face. The RUSS project has done and been precisely that. Let me be more specific about the ways the project has worked for us at Temple.

There are many benefits of sustained collaboration, beginning with conversations and activities on the individual campuses. The RUSS group at Temple has brought faculty and administrators together to identify our strengths and our weaknesses, particularly concerning first-year programs and learning communities. It has been an agenda-setting project from the start, one that invited us to think collectively in more than one direction, minimizing the effects of the University's hierarchical and provincial structure. From such conversations we have been able to build momentum for undergraduate learning. It has consequently been possible to increase faculty and administrative support for integrative and interdisciplinary programs, and to do this within and beyond our learning communities.

Our two-semester core-curriculum course entitled Intellectual Heritage, for example, long a subject of contention, has emerged from the RUSS discussions with new identity and potential as an integrative program. In another area, we have gained endorsement to bridge the gap between academic and student affairs, especially as we discuss academic programs in residence and a comprehensive approach to student services. Many of us knew that we needed to build consensus toward a review of the core curriculum, emphasizing learning, including experiential learning, and calling for support of a plan to define learning outcomes based on competencies or abilities in general education and the majors. We likewise knew that we needed to bring academic and student affairs closer, to make collaboration possible. The RUSS project strengthened the consensus as it began to emerge, giving the entire program credibility.

These initiatives at Temple, I should add, are already viable projects at one or the other of our partner institutions. So we were able at our campus site visits to hear from others who could address practical and political issues, who could offer endorsement and encouragement from an uncompromised position. Many of us have had the frustrating and embarrassing experience of the would-be prophet in our own land. Strong inter-institutional partnerships foster new thinking, provide advice and experience to share, and encourage collaborative leadership—welcome changes.

The site visits sponsored by RUSS did that and more. We were able to use the visits to other campuses as occasions for faculty and staff development. Our Office of Academic Planning, for example, would like to be more involved in program assessment than they have been in the past. We therefore sent an institutional research project manager to visit another campus that has a well-established IR office. We invited a faculty member who had made a commitment to service learning to visit a partner institution, as much for what he could give as what he could gain. The site visits, in short, allowed us to play to our strengths, to learn from others, and to engage in meaningful benchmarking.

There is more. In these volatile times, the instability at the top of central administration is plainly evident. Provosts and presidents come and go—a fact that has drawn notice and prompted a good deal of concern at such gatherings as AAC&U. It is a particular challenge to maintain stability and to encourage growth, experimentation, and reform—let alone set an agenda—if one is responsible for a broad sector of the university. We expect a new president and a new provost at Temple within the next year. Under conditions so changeable and uncertain, one realizes another benefit of collaboration within the university and beyond. How many times I have invoked the RUSS project I cannot count, although I was not an original member of the project, having arrived at Temple in its second year. My own newness provided my office with an opportunity to set our agenda for undergraduate studies; the RUSS project was there to show us where faculty and staff interest and expertise coalesced, where student success appeared most likely to be improved. Our initiatives in integrative learning—and I mean to emphasize both the *integrative* concept and the *learning*—together with our intent to promote and nurture inter-collegial cooperation, building on the successes of the learning communities, came into play with an emerging interest in school and community partnerships and the beginnings of a kindergarten-through-baccalaureate (K-16) agenda. That is now an agenda that many members of the university community can support. I mean to emphasize the fact that key elements of our work were identified and present in the RUSS project.

A vice provost inhabits a peculiar space at a university; in many cases responsible for work over which she has utterly no authority. We are to develop meaningful outcomes assessment and to approach that work by restructuring the curriculum. Many of us want to do this work well, being committed philosophically and pedagogically to it. And moreover, our accrediting commission insists on our efforts. I am designated leader of such efforts, particularly those related to general education and the core curriculum, and more, because the accreditation of the university is the responsibility of my office, on behalf of the provost. Yet, while I have budgetary influence, I control no substantial funds. True authority over the curriculum is, besides, a faculty matter, within the purview of the Faculty Senate. So I am expected to guide without marshalling, to manage without controlling. I happen to admire and attempt to practice decentered and horizontal approaches to leadership and management, convinced that success requires and depends on the contributions of many. The RUSS project has been my model for collaborative, sustainable leadership.

Recently I ran across an opinion piece in *Education Week* on the role of foundations in public education reform, an essay that argued for programmatic, coordinated, and networked initiatives sponsored among private and corporate foundations working with public entities by design.[4] We could use more of that kind of thoughtful boundary crossing—connections among places where firmament meets fin and the results are just fine. It is also true, by the way, that Emily Dickinson found a collaborative alternative to print publication, one based on circulation of manuscripts and gift exchange. She plainly did calculate the survival of her poetry through networking. We might likewise conclude that such activity is essential to the future of undergraduate learning in public institutions. What we ought to do is to link the RUSS grant to one or two other related initiatives, funded by other foundations, and to think about stewardship of such a project, on such a scale.

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[4] Richard H. Hersh, "Foundations for Change," *Education Week* (February 9, 2000).

Faculty Collaboration: Perceptions on Teaching in a Learning Community

Karen Busocker
Temple University

Abstract: An increasing number of campuses are implementing learning communities to address issues such as retention and the transition to college. This essay summarizes findings from a qualitative research study on the role of faculty in learning communities. Learning communities are curricular structures that organize courses around a theme, with some level of collaborative teaching and learning. This essay will describe how faculty viewed their roles in learning communities, including supporting entering students, promoting critical thinking, and creating community among students.

The structure of learning communities provides a forum for innovative faculty to collaborate across academic disciplines in an attempt to integrate learning for first-year students. Since most student learning occurs in the classroom, faculty are the catalyst for students to experience learning in a different way. By collaborating and integrating with colleagues outside their own discipline, faculty can use learning communities not only as a vehicle for enhanced student involvement but also as an opportunity to take their personal learning and teaching philosophies to a new level. The question I address in this essay is, does collaboration occur between faculty who teach in a learning community and if so, how is this collaboration accomplished?

This question has puzzled many administrators and the possible answers are beginning to be investigated. To begin to address this gap in the literature, I completed a qualitative case study on faculty collaboration and integration of curriculum in Learning Communities at Temple University. In this study I combined my experience as an academic advisor as well as my work

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with First-Year Programs and my avid interest in student learning to examine the successes and challenges associated with faculty collaboration in this innovative learning structure.

Certain distinctions must be made when discussing the concepts of integration and collaboration. Collaboration involves working together to exchange ideas, thoughts and/or concepts while integration is the process of unifying these ideas to form a thematic learning community. My research uncovered that Temple faculty are collaborating and *sometimes* integrating their curriculums when participating in a learning community. While these findings are certainly promising, as my examples will show, there is still an opportunity for work to be done in this area.

There are several ways by which faculty from different disciplines achieve integration in a linked-course learning community. One way is through curricular integration. Some faculty found contact points that allowed them to integrate their curriculum more thoroughly but this integration required the reshaping of the first-year writing class to accommodate the integration of subject matter from other disciplines. The following quotes from faculty and the co-director of the Learning Communities program at Temple discuss this phenomenon.

> Co-Director: I think integration is most successful when writing courses are involved…because the writing courses are fairly malleable, adaptable, that can be shaped to fit the surroundings.

The following observations were made by English Composition faculty linked with Music faculty:

> "We filled out the [community plan worksheet] and tried to come up with similarities between music as a form of communication and writing as a form of communication and then my class has the race component…I'm the one who really had to change my syllabus because [the music instructor] really has a structured class…. it was sort of exciting to do Billie Holliday and read her autobiography and read it critically and talk about race in her life and how it influenced her music."

> "We integrated [our work with] the general theme and then specifically tried to focus on, in the middle of the semester, Billie Holliday. So we had a general theme and one specific theme where we could cross over on material."
>
> "[When] we're talking about Thomas Jefferson and we're talking about the sentence structure he used [which] is a very balanced, neo-classical style of sentence structure, I said, 'What about the music from this period? Can you make a cultural connection between say someone who was writing during the 18th century to Jefferson?'"

To facilitate curriculum integration by faculty, each Learning Community team completes a community plan worksheet, which defines the curricular theme of the Learning Community and acts as a blueprint to help direct the team's collaborative effort. For example, the community plan worksheet created by the Music/Composition Learning Community team outlines specific plans for curricular integration:

> One of the main overlaps will be a study of Billie Holliday in both classes. The [English class] will look at her life…by reading her autobiography…the [Music class] will focus on her style of singing…
>
> The [English 50] class linked with Criminal Justice has more of a criminal justice bent…several of the papers focus specifically on the American Justice System (for instance, the summarizing paper engages a *New Yorker* essay about Errol Morris' *The Thin Blue Line*, a documentary about an innocent man sentenced to death).

While faculty do accomplish specific curricular integration, collaboration of philosophy, ideas and principles is more probable. According to the co-director of the Learning Communities program,

> Since [curricular] integration is not always possible…the key, to me, is the willingness to unpack your own course a little bit and look for points of contact with the other course in the learning community. The other key for me is the emphasis on student learning and how students learn best and using the course as a way to inquire into that.

The director of the program emphasizes that even though it may be difficult to integrate on the curricular level, faculty should explore other avenues for collaboration.

In addition to collaboration and curricular integration, two other themes emerged in this study: the emphasis on students' critical thinking skills and the continuity of learning for students. Interviewed faculty agreed that the substance of the integration was not necessarily as important as the development of students' critical thinking skills, their learning skills and styles and how they can be integrated across the disciplines:

> [Students should be] working on [their] skills; on argumentative skills, communication skills and [students] should be working on them in all classes. [Students] should be able to cross over, learn something in one class and bring that skill or knowledge into another and build [themselves] into some type of educated person by the end. And I've found that learning communities really make it easier to make that point, really, more strongly.
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> [Students] should be able to substantiate a particular belief and say where it comes from and accept that there might be some basis of support for [it] which may show [that a student] is wrong….To learn different points at which certain questions are empirical and have evidence that can disprove the others and that other [questions]that are moral and religious and that's very different.

These comments emphasizes the need for faculty collaboration to discover the contact points for each discipline and work towards a continuity of learning.

Whether faculty integrate their curriculum into a linked-course learning community is not easy to discern because it is a nebulous topic. Yet, the arduous process of uncovering evidence has proved productive. The data has revealed that faculty *sometimes* integrate on a curricular level. The collaboration among their linked colleagues was an invaluable experience for most faculty and paved the way for discussion of integration. But in an effort to explore areas where crossover can occur, true integration requires a deep commitment to the collaboration effort as well as the faculty's willingness to modify their own curricular needs. This process takes creativity, patience and time. Many faculty, because of their busy schedules, many not want to expend energy dissecting each syllabus to see where integration can occur. But at Temple University, this is happening in a small, incremental fashion:

> I really like working with another professor. I've enjoyed that when it's worked. I think this is the best [learning community] I've been in terms of the engagement of the other professor.

> This is the third time I've done [a learning community] and each time I've done it with a pair of instructors... one of the things that I've learned is that I have to meet with the instructors first of all and talk with them...
>
> We did get on a couple of students. [My colleague] teaches an 8:40a.m. class and one student was having trouble showing up... I said, "Are you having trouble with him and she said "Yeah. He's not showing up and he's not handing in assignments." So we both sort of got on him.

Clearly, a recurring pedagogy seemed to emerge. All interviewed faculty members were much more interested in student learning issues, such as how a continuity could be created among their different disciplines rather than specific disciplinary integration. Faculty wanted to determine where they could reinforce critical thinking skills that students could use throughout their lifetime, not for just one semester. This developing pedagogy reveals how faculty's teaching philosophy echoes the learning community concept of student learning. Most faculty were working toward the same goal of producing better-educated students; not only in their own discipline but across the academic arena. They wanted students to see that learning does not occur discretely in segregated disciplines but rather, is part of the very fabric of their intellectual and social experience:

> I think it's the continuity across the curriculums...that would be the most useful thing about [the learning community model]...they are learning big ideas and if those big ideas are being reinforced, I think that's really important.... I think that I tell them that understanding these broad themes is really important because their investment is doubled because it's happening in two different classes.
>
> I use the other class, the complimentary class in each learning community to let [my students] realize that the skills they are learning in my class are not just applied to my class. I try to get them to realize that all of the skills that I'm teaching are useful in that other class and in their future classes.
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> What I think was important was that the students see that there's a continuity coming from their English class to Criminal Justice across two entirely different fields...that's a continuity approach...in terms of how we talk and what we emphasis what's important in learning.

Because Temple is a large, urban university with a high commuter population, one of the main functions of our learning communities is community formation. Tinto (1997) discusses the benefits that students receive from participation in a learning community. He states, "Membership in at least one supportive community, whatever the relationship to the center of campus life, may be sufficient to ensure persistence" (p.68). Similarly, Gabelnick, et al. (1990) concur that "learning communities create a unique environment of social and intellectual belonging that is important at any college; they are particularly valuable in large institutions and commuter campuses, where close personal contacts and community making are problematic at best" (p. 64). Temple learning community faculty realize that developing a community within their classroom as well as creating a safe environment to nurture the intellectual curiosities of their students is imperative to a successful Learning Communities program. In addition, Temple faculty understand the value of a conducive learning environment in the classroom, they also recognize that student-to-student interaction plays a significant role in the success of a learning community and any attempt to incorporate this realization into their classroom pedagogy:

> You know I've always thought [my teaching philosophy] to be very much in line with the goals of the Learning Community, and I've actually done some teaching before I came to Temple but I've done a lot more teaching here and being a part of Learning Community has really shaped the way I approach teaching and thinking about the classroom…I really do like thinking of the classroom as a community and trying to use techniques that build community…trust and security.
>
> Students are more comfortable as people it seems to me. They're less petrified because there's a friendly face for them. They're going to classes with the same people and they may not even like them, they might be annoyed by them. But they seemed more relaxed which I think is good which helps them to learn.
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> I think one aspect of a Learning Community is that you have the opportunity to be more comfortable talking about things with people you get to know. Opening up and giving your opinions and such is a risky thing to so. It's fearful. It's frightening and to do that you need to feel safe and not just physically safe. That's a given but intellectually and

> emotionally safe so that someone is not going to make fun of you or ridicule you for something that perhaps you didn't think through very carefully or that might be completely contrary to how the group feels.

It is evident from these comments that learning communities strive to provide a safe environment for students to explore new theory as well as interact on a deeper level with peers and faculty.

We know that students receive several benefits by participating in a learning community, what about the faculty? The recurring theme of faculty communication and how instrumental it is in creating a successful learning community resounded throughout the interviews. The co-director of the program describes the benefit of collaboration for faculty in the following comment:

> The benefits for faculty are, it gets the faculty together outside of departments working on problems of common concern by figuring out what urban freshman are like and what they need to learn better.

The faculty view communication as stated below:

> I really like working with another professor. I've enjoyed that when it's worked. I think this is the best one I think I've been in terms of the engagement of the other professor.
>
> And I think the idea of community among instructors is a good idea. We're so busy there's no reason for us to get together and talk about our classes. We don't have time to talk about the papers. We're grading papers.
>
> This is the third time I've done it now and each time I've done it with a pair of instructors and one of the things that I've learned is that I have to meet with the instructors, first of all and talk with them… Once you've made a commitment to the teaching community and you say these are the two doing English, then I think the communication from the faculty is important. They don't have to be talking all the time and meeting all the time but the at least need to have to be in communication before the semester started.

The goals of a learning communities' program is to encourage faculty-to-faculty interaction as well as student-to-student interaction but sometimes these goals can be difficult to achieve. In discussions with Temple faculty, two fundamental obstacles for the learning communities program were uncovered: resistance to faculty collaboration and disruptive student behavior. While faculty who collaborated in their linked-course learning community enjoyed a positive experience, lack of faculty collaboration led to an unsuccessful learning community. Several faculty members commented that the more contact they had with their learning community team members, the more successful the collaboration effort became. Faculty also alluded to the fact that team members must be committed, both with their time and their interest in the philosophy of learning communities. The co-director of the learning communities program states:

> …from the beginning there was too much, what I call stove-piping. That is, too much failure of the departments willing to collaborate. We had to break down the walls between departments and get faculty from departments to focus on a common goal. That is taking a common, single group of students and improving their performance.

Faculty clearly support this sentiment:

> It seemed like the people I was working with in [another department] were like, "Oh my students are taking your class. That's nice but you do you're thing and if we need you we'll let you know." They weren't very interested in collaboration. They are their own department and they do their own thing. That was that… Whenever I've felt that the Learning Community wasn't as good…when it wasn't as useful as it could be, it's been because the people doing it didn't seem to care about the Learning Community, it was just convenient or it was a good idea at the time but when the time came they didn't have the time to put into it…I guess being sure that people who are doing it are committed to doing it, want to do it are going to go through the steps to make it more successful.
>
> We have not had much contact…so for some reason interest in getting together has declined …I know people are busy…. but at least we could discuss individual students' progress who seem to be missing classes.
>
> The previous two times I've taught…the other departments assign someone, then they change them, then they change them again. And the people coming in receive the information the first day of class…I'd met them, but I had no real chance to discuss any of this. And so it was just a non-starter. It was contrary to the idea of a Learning Community.

> [Collaboration] was very much left up to, if you get the chance to meet with those [faculty in the linked course learning community] it would be very nice. It would be a good idea to exchange syllabi. Well, it's got to be more structured than that. You *should* be meeting with people. You *should* be exchanging syllabi. You *should* do these things. Not you should, you MUST! If you're going to do this you must do that.

Along with resistance to faculty collaboration, the other, very interesting challenge was the emergence of disruptive student behavior. Several of the faculty discussed that even in the wake of the community spirit the Learning Community model helps create, disruptive class behavior became a significant barrier to a successful learning environment. Faculty may not be able to cover the necessary material planned for a class period because of lateness and goofing off. Faculty may have to modify their teaching style in order to deal with this situation, which may counter the student learning philosophy of learning communities. For example, faculty may focus their attention on controlling the group rather than facilitating group interaction. Faculty also may begin to lose control of the group because the camaraderie that develops within a learning community may develop into a "mob mentality"; faculty may feel that the students are "ganging up" on them. This dynamic within the learning communities classroom creates a dichotomy for faculty. A faculty member may have to act as a disciplinarian as opposed to the catalyst that exemplifies the philosophy of learning communities.

> Students get to know one another too well. Get to know one another very quickly…from the third week of classes they know almost everybody…and they sort of get in these cliques and they not only get to know each other too well but they then start talking a lot.
>
> In a way the fact is that it's basically a community of friends…in one way it makes it more difficult because there's a lot more goofing off. And the stuff that happens outside the class people are bringing into the class. Kidding around, inside jokes, things like that. In a way one of my classes in particular is very hard to get to the lessons that I want to get done in the class period.
>
> I tend to be very strict about attendance and about passing things in on time, and a lot of this stuff I've been easing of maybe too much this semester because of it is a LC and I'm trying to understand a little more and I assume if I pushed it too much I may have a major revolt on my hands.

> This is another drawback of my interaction with my idea of LC. I saw them as a group so even though only 1/3 of them were sort of acting out or acting cliquish, they were the third that were really vocal and they were overdetermining the vibe of the group. Because I was thinking that this was a group more so than it was a regular class, I saw them more as a group and so that negative behavior that was really in 1/ 3 of the class really determined my perception of the group. So it wasn't until after the mid-term break that I discovered that most of the class was really unhappy with this small group.
>
> In a way there is a mob mentality that arises. [In] one of my classes I have a problem with lateness. And if one person says let's go get lunch, then because they are all friends, they are less likely to act independently and I literally today had 10 people show up late.

The fellowship that develops in a learning community can be bittersweet. The dynamic of the class may force a faculty member to become more hierarchical when the objective is to create a partnership in learning.

At Temple, we know that faculty *sometimes* integrate on the curricular level but more often collaborate on the pedegological level. We also know that faculty enjoy interacting with their interdisciplinary colleagues. Lack of faculty collaboration as well as disruptive student behavior that may impede the success of the learning community was an important discovery that uncovered areas that still need to be explored. Synthesizing this information will help administrators build a stronger, more effective learning communities program at Temple. It is imperative for institutions to assess their programs to see if they are working to the success or detriment of its participants.

What remains for educational administrators and faculty in the realm of learning communities? There are still many issues to be addressed by researchers, including the necessity to recruit, train, support and retain dedicated faculty as well as developing easier methods for faculty to collaborate and uncover the contact points necessary to implement a truly integrated curricular experience. Nonetheless, the integration of the learning community philosophy is supporting the paradigmatic shift from teaching-centered to student-centered learning. Although this shift is slow, but programs like these will help bring institutions into the 21st century of integrated learning.

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Writing Courses in Learning Communities

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Abstract: First year writing classes have the unique effect of anchoring student experience in a learning community. Partnered with a sociology class, three writing instructors reflect on how the learning community model influences the way first year writing is taught and learned, and how writing as an anchor course influences the outcome of the learning community arrangement for students.

Eli's Introduction

In a majority of learning communities at Temple University, writing courses are matched with some other content course. For this reason, on an administrative level the First-Year Writing Program (FYWP) serves as an anchor for Learning Communities, and the director of FYWP works closely with the LC director on scheduling issues. FYWP offers basic writing (English 40) and college composition (English 50) as well as ESL versions of both (41 and 51, respectively). Each fall, at least forty-five sections of the two courses are linked to other courses in the social sciences, business, or other areas through the Learning Community program.

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But in the learning lives of our students, writing courses also serve to anchor the experience of learning communities. Writing classes are usually smaller than the classes with which they are paired; writing instructors have more one-on-one conferences with their students than do instructors in other courses, and as a consequence the teacher/student relationship can grow stronger in writing classes. In both 40 and 50 classes, students generally develop a bond of trust with each other as well because they are constantly reading and critiquing each other's work. Writing instructors tend to be more flexible in their choice of subject matter, and therefore it is more often the case that the writing course is tailored to fit the course to which it is linked rather than the other way round. These and other factors make writing courses seem to be ideal partners in learning communities, indeed to serve as *de facto* homerooms for learning communities. But we must not accept this easy fit without principled reflection and assessment. In this brief paper we would like to identify some issues that arise from this role as homeroom emphasizing the advantages for students and teachers but also recognizing the problems.

Overall, we are enthusiastic about the way writing courses in learning communities can focus students on the skills and abilities they will need in their later academic careers, but we note the limitations of partnership among faculty in the very busy world of course schedules, committee work, and research deadlines. We hope that this report will raise two linked questions for our colleagues at other universities:

1) How does the learning community model influence the way writing is taught and learned?
2) How does writing as an anchor course influence the outcome of the learning communities arrangement for students?

We offer these questions as a means of sparking conversation both about writing instruction and Learning Communities. Our own impression is that something new and promising emerges out of the cooperation between our two programs at Temple, but this paper is only the beginning of that consideration for us. We consider the case of one learning community in which both basic writing and introductory college composition courses were linked with a sociology course and introductory freshman seminars designed to ease new students' transition from high school to college. First, we will describe the particular situation and review responses students in this seminar made to surveys administered before and after the course. Then we report the experiences of two participating teachers in the community, one teaching English 40 and the other teaching English 50. This short discussion – a version of a longer study – cannot show much about the two questions we have posed, but certainly our work suggests that writing has a valuable part to play in the learning community movement. At the same time, learning communities challenge writing programs to live up to their original charge: to prepare students for success within the world of academic discourse.

The LC Partnership

In the spring of 1999, the authors agreed to work on a learning community with sociology professor Kevin Delaney and classics professor Dan Tompkins. Eli and Rachel would teach a section each of basic writing (called at Temple English 40), and Kathryn would teach a college composition course (Temple's English 50) while Kevin would teach an Intro to Sociology and Dan would teach half the students in a freshman seminar. The other half of the students would take freshman seminar with Kathryn. The freshman seminar is a one-credit course that meets for only the first half of the semester once a week. In this eight week period students explore time management, the vagaries of financial aid and the advising system, and generally develop their skills as college students. The basic writing course is designed for students who were not placed direct into the college composition course because their record and performance on placement exams suggested they needed a full year of writing instruction to prepare them for the rigors of upper level college courses. Introduction to Sociology initiates students into what Kevin calls the "sociological imagination" and focuses on race, class, and gender analyses of American political and economic life.

The group met in the summer and discussed what pedagogical and theoretical issues we hoped to share. Kathryn, Rachel, and Eli met independently to develop a reader we could all use, and in July we finalized the table of contents and ordered copies of the book through a custom publishing division of a major publishing house. We decided on readings based on a set of criteria that reflected our experiences as writing instructors as well as our concern for connections with the sociology course. We decided to focus the writing courses on the interactions between the sociological imagination and the literary imagination. Thus we chose readings that challenged students about stories they read or knew from childhood. For example, the collection juxtaposed Bruno Bettelheim's work on fairy tales against Anne Sexton's version of *Snow White*. We also settled on one book that would be shared with Kevin's class, *The Color of Water* by James McBride. That book combines a writer's approach to a personal story with a narrative marked by race, class, and gender issues. We talked over our ideas for assignments and sequences, but decided not to use a common syllabus. This would be an individual adventure for each of us but with the advantage of some shared understandings and frequent conversation. For the whole group, including Kevin and Dan and the undergraduate peer mentors and writing associates, we set up a listserv to facilitate communication among all of us about the students and the course material.

The results of our efforts were promising, but the project didn't quite live up to our expectations. The three writing instructors did in fact get together from time to time to talk about our course, particularly Rachel and Eli, who were both teaching basic writing. The listserv did keep us up on some developments in different courses, but too often the conversation went dormant during busy points in the semester when we probably most needed to talk to each other. Our best moment of information exchange came two-thirds of the way through the semester when we had a flurry of messages about students who were struggling in our classes or who had stopped attending. At that point we were able to pool information about students in a productive way. Because writing instructors had so many more conferences, Kathryn, Rachel, and Eli tended to be able to answer questions others had about the reason for absences or poor performance. In one case, a student had sustained a severe personal trauma in her life, and Rachel was able to explain this student's erratic attendance and wandering attention to Kevin and Dan. In other cases, Eli knew that three students had stopped attending because of financial crises at home. We all talked about strategy to approach students who were having problems in one class or another. Eli knew that one of his brightest students had a learning disability she was reluctant to admit to, even though it had been diagnosed for some years, and this information helped Dan and Kevin interpret some of her resistant behavior in their classes. Yet, we could have coordinated our efforts far better, preparing students for each other's assignments and reinforcing critical approaches more effectively.

Still, students in their exit surveys were all but unanimous in their report that seeing the same students in three classes was an advantage for them. Many said they felt the arrangement made them more comfortable talking in class discussions and more likely to ask each other for help. The connection between the courses they saw was primarily that sociology and writing shared readings, but many commented that they appreciated multiple perspectives on the readings (as one student in Kathryn's class remarked: "We read the same books although we viewed them in different ways. Which helped me out a lot because it gave me a chance to learn how to look at things more than one way") and a more or less common approach to writing the expository essays (as another of Kathryn's students wrote: "The papers that we had to write for sociology and English, were sometimes similar, which made it a lot easier to write them"). Some complained that they might have liked to meet more people than the shared classes allowed, but the social familiarity of a learning community seemed to add appreciably to their learning experience. One student noted about Kathryn's freshman seminar that "being able to talk things over with classmates" was helpful while "sharing our similar problems and having a mediator there to guide us was the best." In a real sense the combination of courses in this learning community demonstrated founding ideas of the writing across the curriculum movement: that academic discourse supports certain types of critical thinking common to college life but that each discipline also has its particular approaches to constituting knowledge and evaluating claims.

Rachel's Case Study: Gender (non) Politics in English 40

Our decision to develop a custom reader geared toward sociological subjects and to tailor our syllabi to Kevin Delaney's sociology course was based on the idea that a synergy between the courses would improve the learning environment. In particular, we felt that this synergy would be especially helpful to English 40 students. First, it would allow students to concentrate on the writing process itself, rather than struggling with terms and subject matter that were unfamiliar. Secondly, writing and thinking critically about sociologically based texts in the writing class would hopefully enhance their comprehension and retention of sociology concepts. Finally, I hoped that my particular English 40 syllabus would demonstrate how knowledge is interconnected, that is, the ways and means of thinking, writing, and discussing can be transferred between and among other college courses. For students in a course officially titled, "Introduction to Academic Discourse," I felt that this last item was key not only to this course, but also to future success in their college careers.

For my English 40 class, the potential for synergy occurred most significantly in their "gender" readings: Anne Sexton's poem "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" and Noel Perrin's essay "The Androgynous Man." Concurrently in their Sociology class, students were reading Arlie Hochschild's *The Second Shift*. Each reading addresses the issue of sex/gender roles in the United States. Sexton's poem is an ironic rewriting of the classic fairy tale, in which Snow White is pictured not as the ideal woman, but instead is described as a bimbo. Perrin's essay is a meditation on gender roles, particularly what role men are expected to assume; he asserts that he doesn't fall into the stereotypical category of "male." *The Second Shift* examines the social and economic changes surrounding the growth of women in the workplace.

Discussions for this unit included both in-class and listserv conversations about the Sexton and Perrin pieces. In-class discussions centered on understanding the main point of the texts, and exercises included an open discussion of the issue (gender roles) and the pieces themselves and group work in which half of the class had to teach the other half the main point of the piece. The discussion questions posted on our class listserv were designed to get my students to start writing about the issues and to start thinking about the pieces in a more complicated manner—tasks included compare/contrast, analysis of the argument, and looking at rhetorical difference (see Appendix for a list of the discussion questions). The last assignment posted on the listserv asked students to develop an essay question that tied the two pieces together:

> Short Assignment
>
> Imagine that you are teaching an English 40 class and your students have just finished reading Perrin's essay and Sexton's poem. Develop an essay question that ties these two works together.

Up until that point, we had been examining the two pieces separately. This last question asked my students to think and write about the two essays differently, in a way that would emphasize the connectedness of learning, one of my goals for the course. My secondary purpose was to allow my students to influence and direct one of the essay topics for this, their third, paper. While many of the students did not answer this last question (due to logistical problems with posting to the listserv), I was pleased with the results I received. The students who responded demonstrated both a grasp of the pieces individually and the ability to construct common issue between the two works:

> Do you believe that an "androgynous man" would refer to the mirror the way Sexton says women do? Remember the "androgynous man" isn't completely masculine, they enjoy a lot of things women like. Give examples from the poem and story to back your thought on these questions.
>
> What are the social roles the character/s in Perrin's essay and Sexton's poem play and are expected to play?
>
> Compare and Contrast
>
> Discuss whether or not you think it would be appropriate for a young child (elementary school) to read Sextons version of Snow White and Perrin's "Androgynous Man". Explain why or why not with ideas from the text. What things do these authors imply they may or may not be appropriate for a child? Is one writing more appropriate then the other?
>
> Do you think that the way that society views people influenced Perrin and Sexton in writing the "Androgynous Man" and "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs"?
>
> How do the two essays, Saxton's and Perrin's, characterize the gender role of men and women? How do these roles contradict the role that is portrayed in today's

> society? What are some of the similarities/differences in the way both authors describe the gender role of the main characters?

I noticed that most of the questions addressed the issue of gender roles and how the common conception of those roles could be contrasted to the roles as presented in the pieces. So before distributing the essay questions (they had to choose between three), I altered the first essay question so that my students could continue along that same thought process. To extend that theme, I suggested that they use one of their sociology texts to provide a definition for traditional gender roles:

> In a general sense, Perrin and Sexton are both defining/redefining gender roles. Pick one author and show how the "new" definition compares and contrasts to the "traditional" definition of masculine and feminine. You can use one of your sociology texts to provide evidence for the "traditional" definition (you will need to use proper referencing standards & give a bibliography at the end of the paper).

When creating the topics, I was sure that many students would pick the topic listed above. For one, by asking students to compare and contrast Sexton or Perrin's gender definitions to the "traditional" definition, the topic continued the general theme as expressed in many of the students' sample essay questions. Although not everyone was able to provide a sample essay question, all of the students received a copy of the essay questions via the listserv. In addition, the topic of gender roles and what made a "man/woman" was an active topic of discussion in class. In this discussion, I encouraged them to link their views to what they were learning in sociology. Finally, since the students were reading *The Second Shift* concurrently to our discussion of gender readings, I felt that my students would see a connection between their writing course and their sociology course—a connection that would be expressed through writing. I saw this essay topic as a neat encapsulation of the philosophy behind Learning Communities in general (one class reflecting or highlighting knowledge/skills learned in the other class), as well as reinforcement of the philosophy behind basic writing courses—that writing is a unique means for expressing thought, a concrete way for students to explore the relationships between ideas.

However, as often happens in teaching, my assumptions about topic preferences proved false. Of the 15 students enrolled in the course, only three students chose to write on the gender role topic. Most students chose to write on topics two and three: comparing and contrasting the characters of the Queen and Snow White with regard to feminine stereotypes, and comparing and contrasting Perrin's androgynous man to a male interviewee (chosen by the student). Nearly all of my students, regardless of the topic chosen, complained about the gender paper saying that it was difficult to write, both in terms of both planning out the structure of the paper and in figuring out what to say about the texts. Moreover, despite the fact that I had encouraged the class to take advantage of their sociology texts for this essay (and one question went so far as to explicitly suggest that course of action), only one student—one of those who chose paper topic one—made any clear reference to a sociology text by quoting, summarizing, and using parenthetical references.

However, lack of parenthetical references aside, most students appeared to be using "gender" as a sociological term; that is, they understood it as a term different from "sex." In addition, a majority also appeared to be paraphrasing definitions they had either read or heard during sociology lectures (a lack of parenthetical referencing made this difficult to determine for certain). To a limited degree, my experiment in asking students to transfer sociological terms to the environment of the writing class and then apply those terms to works of literature was successful. Implicitly students demonstrated that they could restate sociological terms in a different arena.

Kathryn's Case Study: Doubling up—reflections on teaching both first year writing and freshman seminar in a learning community

As Eli suggested earlier, when we teach first year writing, either English 40 or 50, we have the unique charge of supporting *all* academic disciplines. I see the first year writing class as a transitional site where I not only encourage my students to understand what is interesting and exciting in any particular field, but also to understand how writing gets packaged and processed by different audiences. To extend Eli's "homeroom" metaphor, I like to think of a student's roster in terms of the floor plan of a house, with the writing classroom as the "living room." The writing class gives us a comfortable space to talk, in a direct way, about what is going on in the other "rooms."

Temple's Learning Community model provided me with a real-time forum for talking about the disparate notions of what constitutes effective, appropriate discourse in some of these different "rooms." As my students struggled to revise their sociology papers, in our writing class we reflected on the different formal, rhetorical and heuristic demands and expectations of both sociology and English. Several students remarked in conference with me that the writing class helped them revise their papers and gave them ideas for writing strategies they could use in subsequent sociology projects.

However, unlike Rachel and Eli, I had the additional opportunity to teach a one-credit freshman seminar class to my same cohort of composition students. As part of the learning community model, the freshman seminar is designed to ease new students' transition from high school to college but providing them with connections to academic and social support. In a school culture where the various demands of work, school, family, and friends vie for everyone's attention, it is critical that someone talk about how students can more effectively negotiate institutional requirements. Because my freshman seminar met immediately after our writing class (in the same building but on another floor) I had a total of eighty minutes together with my students instead of the forty minutes typically allotted to a three-day-a-week freshman writing class. The learning community clearly provided me with more time with my students and we got to know each other sooner and better than we would have otherwise.

As a writing teacher my over-arching goal is to sharpen my students' knowledge of, and expand their insight about, language. More specifically, I want my students to cultivate and learn to exercise the same kind of control over meaning that "professional" writers have. When more experienced writers read and write, they implicitly ask critical questions, see lines of argument, perceive hidden assumptions, evaluate evidence, and form their own opinions about the adequacy of evidence. But my dual role as writing teacher and freshman seminar instructor forced me to reconsider how I performed in both. After my first week teaching both classes my comfortable writing teacher persona became oddly ill fitting. While I was "at home" discussing writerly ethos and the rhetorical analysis of texts with my students, in freshman seminar I encouraged them to discuss their concerns about a variety of non-writing topics which ultimately included issues such as drugs, drinking, sleeping in class, attendance, and student-teacher relations, to name just a few. Unlike the workshop environment I tried to cultivate in my writing class, the freshman seminar discussion -- which sometimes turned into a provocative gripe session -- magnified all of the peripheral difficulties that impinge on student's academic success including those kinds of issues that a sensitive writing teacher certainly acknowledges but doesn't typically address at length or in depth, except in individual cases.

My sense of "double consciousness" became particularly evident to me when our early morning writing class became the subject of criticism in our mid-morning freshman seminar. At about mid-semester, during the ten minute interval we had between our writing class and freshman seminar, Ellen approached me; she was upset that she hadn't received an A on her first writing assignment of the semester. But her response to earning a B- was not unusual; students – particularly those who can write relatively well -- often see a first year writing class as an institutional hoop they must jump through before they can get on with "real" college work and, to a limited degree, there is good reason for this. Freshmen who received very good grades in their English classes throughout high school are often disappointed and angry to discover that the kind of writing that earned them an A back then often doesn't meet college-level expectations and requirements.

What made this particular situation unique is that immediately after my discussion with Ellen, as I began teaching the freshman seminar class, Jeffrey also took the opportunity to criticize what he perceived as my "tough grading." Two more students echoed Ellen and Jeffrey's criticisms and I slipped (quite naturally, I think) into a defensive position; I felt my face redden. My students' responses were clearly not an invitation for the kind of give-and-take discussion we had grown accustomed to thus far in freshman seminar. With no time to prepare a response, I had become the target of the same kind of criticism I had elicited from my students with regard to their other classes. It suddenly seemed that I could not really "be" the same teacher in both the writing classroom and in freshman seminar.

Despite my visceral reaction of defensiveness, past experience counseled me not to become engaged in the kind of confrontation my students seemed to want. I had to maintain control of the class while being careful not to pull rank and thus risk minimizing the seriousness of my students concerns about their grades. So again, with no opportunity to prepare, I invoked what I knew intuitively: I moved what would have been an awkward gripe session toward a rhetorical analysis of what happens when two different people or groups of people have different expectations in a communication interaction, and what effective rhetors do to come to a resolution. In effect, I was using the idea of rhetorical analysis -- a familiar, running topic in our writing class -- to teach this particular seminar as well as address student concerns about grades. Perhaps I didn't have to switch identities between classes after all.

I asked my students to talk about what they considered the characteristics of both an A paper and A-caliber class participation – for work they might do in any class, not just our writing class. As they called out their responses, I wrote them on the board. With regard to written assignments they listed characteristics such as, "addressing the assignment" and "doing what the teacher wants." "Grammatical correctness," "proper format," "meeting due dates," and "having a thesis, body and conclusion" were also contenders. I was waiting for someone to use the term "exceptional" or "outstanding" or some variation on this, but no one did. With regard to the characteristics of A-grade class participation, "frequency of contribution to class discussion" dominated, followed by having "done the reading," "coming to class regularly," and "being on time."

When I got around to introducing both the idea of the exceptional paper and my vision of outstanding class participation – class involvement that included referring to and thoughtfully commented on the assigned readings as well as responding thoughtfully to peer writing -- I had prepared myself for the following questions, which came in a barrage: "What do you mean by "'exceptional?'"and "What do you mean by 'thoughtful'"? "What about the fact that we are *students* who are supposed to be *learning* this stuff?" Of course I had no definitive answers to these good questions. But this time, I was prepared -- I'd set up my students and myself for this very discussion and had to follow through. By the end of the class I ultimately, if somewhat reluctantly, agreed with my students conclusion that yes, it is important for an instructor to make very specific expectations clear from the first day of class. As part of our resolution, I agreed to raise, by one letter, every student's mid-semester grades.

My reluctance to "bargain" with my students grew out of a sense that I had to give up power. But at the macro level, negotiating grades wasn't really the primary issue here. What was at issue was my need to respond to an immediate, local contingency. Because I taught two different classes with different objectives, I was forced to handle tensions that arose *because* of my two roles. While I did not find evidence that my learning community experience directly improved student writing, it did, however make me a better teacher. In this case the learning community model directly impacted how I taught both classes and writing as the anchor course ended up influencing, to a larger degree than I ever expected, the outcome of my teaching in the freshman seminar, at least in this particular situation.

Appendix

Listserve Discussion Questions

1) Carefully describe the nature and attributes of Perrin's "Androgynous Man." In what ways does it differ from his definition of a "he-man"?

2) Perrin argues that the feminist movement has "freed men." How has it freed them? Is this statement convincingly supported in this essay (i.e., evaluate the evidence that he provides)?

3) Sexton's retelling of this classic fairy tale probably differs from the one you are used to. Some of these differences have to do with the fact that her source (the original Grimm Brothers story) is much harsher than the version we usually hear as kids; other differences have to do with Sexton's "modernization" of the tale. Pick out four details that are different from the story you remember and explain how they change the story (plot, tone, moral, etc.).

4) Sexton's poem says something about the way women are perceived by society. What do you think that something is (use examples from the text)? Do you agree with her (why/why not)?

Building Community through Learning: Moving Students into the University by Moving Outside the Classroom

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Abstract: The authors argue that learning communities have worked within too limited a definition of "community." Using their experience at Temple University, the authors argue for a conception of community that draws upon a student's vernacular knowledge and neighborhood supports. In doing so, they attempt to align learning communities with recent work in Composition Studies which argues for universities to link with the community and public schools.

> *Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion -- invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like history or anthropology or economics or English. The student has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community. ...*
>
> David Bartholomae, "Inventing the University"

> *The New American College, as a connected institution, would be committed to improving, in a very intentional way, the human condition.*
>
> Ernest Boyer, "Creating the New American College"

Learning to speak "our language" is not a natural or an easy process for any student. In an urban context, where students tend to be the first in their families to attend college, live off-campus, and work twenty hours a week, it seems safe to say that inventing the university is next to impossible. First year students, especially, feel the intense pressure of "inventing the

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university." Learning Communities grew out of the recognition of this impossibility. They are an effort to retain entering students in larger urban universities by allowing them to form an immediate connection to the institution in their first year.

In this paper, we will use our experience teaching within a learning community at Temple University to frame the past history of "learning communities" and to suggest possible new directions. One way to speak about learning communities is to see them as an attempt by university/college administrators, staff, and faculty to "reinvent" the concept of a university. Typically, the Freshman year can often seem a set of unrelated requirements, separate from a student's intended major, and offering only a scattered map of the university resources. Students may be in an introductory math course, but not hear about the math resource center or tutoring programs available. They may be in a writing course but not see its connection to writing due in their anthropology class. Recognizing the fragmented nature of the freshman year, learning communities were created to provide a set of supports that can quickly integrate the student into the questions and larger life of the academy. The theory is that if students received an intensive introduction to the "university," they would be more apt to be able to navigate its terrain and succeed.

In doing so, the learning communities grew at the same moment as "small learning communities" emerged in large public schools (Hoffman). In these schools, teachers across disciplines were broken into teams that met regularly to design curricula (often around a theme), discuss the needs of individual students, and develop common categories to evaluate/assess student learning. The effect of these changes was to provide students with a sense of community within the large school and increased teacher/ student interaction. In surveying the needs of their student populations, urban universities adopted a similar model. As framed by Anne Goodsell

Love and Kenneth A. Tokuno, learning communities, then, have typically been characterized by the following criteria:

> a. a common cohort of students taking the same class
>
> b. an interdisciplinary team of faculty teaching the course with a common theme
>
> c. students forming study groups for their courses, spending time socializing outside of class, and/or sharing strategies for success
>
> d. collaborative class activities and assignments that require students to work together and intentionally practice skills such as communication, cooperation, and/or conflict resolution
>
> e. all of the above (Levine, 9).

As quoted by Jodi Levine, another definition of learning communities might be:

> Any one of a variety of curricular structures that link together several existing courses -- or actually restructure the material entirely -- so that students have opportunities for deeper understanding and integration of the material they are learning, and more interaction with one another and their teachers are fellow participants in the learning enterprise (Levine, viii).

Learning communities, then, are an attempt to introduce in microcosm the workings of the university as a whole. Students are asked to see how their courses are inter-related. Faculty are able to demonstrate through a common theme how different disciplines can offer valuable conceptual paradigms. "Anthropology" which before might have seemed a foreign language, now becomes recognizable in relation to the topic and another discipline. In many ways, the reason d'être for a liberal arts education becomes manifest.

Students also develop a sense of how the university works. The increased faculty attention to student success allows conversations to occur about different educational resources outside the classroom. Depending on the resources of the student's public school, they may be unfamiliar with dedicated centers, such as a writing center or mathematics and science resource center. On-line aids or computer-based instructional programs may not have been part of their education. Depending on the nature of student/ teacher interaction in their high school, the students might not translate the concept of faculty "office hours" as an opportunity to discuss the academic work of the course. Learning communities, in theory, also demonstrate a broader conception of learning and faculty/student interaction.

Finally, it could be argued, students gain this understanding simultaneously with more general educational competencies. Through students working around projects, they get a sense of the collaborative nature of education. Presentations and portfolios model the need to make the production of knowledge understandable to others within their community. These skills, although often unstated, echo recent trends in the working world. That is, learning communities, intentionally or not, prepare students for the newly emerging paradigms of worker skills -- inter-cultural communication, group work, and project-based tasks. It might be added, then, that learning communities not only provide a model for how students might invent themselves as university students, but as future workers as well. In an urban university environment, where students often feel the economic pressure to secure employment upon graduation, this is an important component for them. In these ways, Learning Communities, traditionally defined, are important interventions into the first-year experiences of students at large universities.

We are suggesting, however, that a reconception of the term "community" is the next step for this curricular movement. Thus far, learning communities have been based on a limited definition of community and, as a consequence, offer a limited institutional frame from which students can connect with the university. Consider the language of Bartholomae from above. As conceived, the university exists as set of disciplines, experts, and novices. Each of the learning community models above echo this view of the academic community. While the themes may be interdisciplinary, the work is clearly pointed inwards -- towards encouraging students to burrow further into the recesses of the academy. Student projects, collaborative learning, and other "skills" are all conceived as ways to insure success in a university envisioned as decidedly separate from the world around it. The university becomes a foreign country that demands the students leave behind their homeland, so to speak.

For the student who grew up within multiple learning communities (churches, schools, families, neighborhood organizations), a clear signal is being sent: a learning community in the university is "faculty, students, student affair professionals, and academic administrators"(viii), it is not the parents who read to them, the neighborhood which protected them, or the local organizations which gave them support. And even for the student who moves to the university and lives in the dormitories, seemingly leaving those communities behind, these students, in fact the university, still exist within neighborhoods and local histories.

We would suggest Boyer's vision of the university as a "connected institution committed to improving in an very intentional way, the human condition" offers a more expansive and progressive vision of a university education. His vision asks us to consider what the university should value about learning and how it should serve a social purpose. He does not cut the student off from the social, cultural, and intellectual support of their home community. Indeed, much of the literature surrounding community building focuses on student -to-student bonding or student-to-faculty bonding, leaving out the student to community/ neighborhood connection Boyer proposes. It could be asked how a re-vision of community along the lines of Boyer would educate students about their immediate and future responsibilities?

In response, we would offer an alternative approach to the model of a university learning community model. It has been our experience that many faculty, administrators, and staff are involved in projects that take them off campus and into the surrounding community. One of our faculty colleagues dedicates her time to developing neighborhood cultural institutions. University administrators sit on community and public school resource boards. Some offer advice to organizations committed to supporting the rights of the homeless. Others volunteer at literacy projects or work with public school teachers. All of them act out of a different sense of the academic community. (For a partial listing of faculty/administration community activities at Temple University, visit www.community.temple.edu/outreach.) In their work, the meaning of community expands to include the ways in which our academic ways of talking interact and are transformed by being placed into use by neighbors, community organizations, public schools, and political organizations. Those of us most clearly constructed as "inside" the university exist, that is, simultaneously inside and outside of the world our students imagine they are trying to enter.

Rather than see students as involved in the process of entering our culture, narrowly defined, we might instead take up the challenge of recognizing the need of students to negotiate and exist within many communities at once, as we do. As stated by Joe Harris in "The Idea of Community in the Study of Writing,"

> Our students are no more wholly "outside" the discourse of the university than we are wholly "within" it. We are all at once both insiders and outsiders. The fear (or hope) of either camp that our students will be "converted" from "their" language to "ours" is both overstated and misleading. The task facing our students, as Min-zhan Lu has argued, is not to leave one community in order to enter another, but to *reposition* themselves in relation to several continuous and conflicting discourses. Similarly, our goals as teachers need not be to initiate our students into the value and practices of our community, but to offer them the chance to reflect critically on those discourses -- of home, school, work, the media, and the like -- to which they already belong (268).

We would add to Harris' vision that a central piece of this reflection is to have students continue with their commitment to different institutions, organizations, and individuals outside the classroom. Or, put more simply, we need to recognize the university community as already involved in such work. We need to develop an understanding of how learning can quickly gain value for students when based in a dynamic of reflection/practice. Wayne Campbell Peck, Linda Flower, and Lorraine Higgins get at this same idea with their conception of community literacy:

> Community literacy means more than simply representing different views in conversation. It seeks to restructure the conversation itself into a collaboration in which individuals share expertise and experience through the act of planning and writing about problems they jointly define. The goal is not to resolve the myriad of differences that arise in a mixed working group, but to treat diversity as a resource for solving specific problems. [An] aim of community literacy is to bring a *strategic approach* to this conversation and to support people in developing new strategies for decision-making (205).

If we take seriously the idea that the university is a site of knowledge production, we also need to take seriously the idea that students need a real introduction into how that knowledge is produced – one way being in collaboration with communities existing outside the classroom and university.

However unintentionally, the language around learning communities often frames students as objects that must be filled with our language, our ways of knowing. While it is clearly necessary for students to "learn our ways." Their own knowledges often get ignored or pushed aside. Or as Paulo Friere writes, "Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the student patiently receives, memorizes, and repeats. …They do, it is true have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the last analysis it is the men [sic] themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system"(208). As Harris and Peck, et.al, would argue, simply having debates in a classroom, or allowing interdisciplinary conversation to occur, does not position allow students to formulate themselves as they already are, involved in a variety of communities. Group work involving only those in the employ of the university or enrolled in the university is not the most productive model of communication. Indeed, we would argue it does not even accurately represent the workings of the university.

Finally, it does not appear that learning communities, traditionally defined, demonstrate how education can provide students with the skills to reframe public debates, produce different conversations, and, it could be argued, a different material reality within communities. Peck, et. al, highlight conversations that university and public school students had around the issue of school suspension. By creating a space for conversation, these different communities were able to build a new way of speaking which produced alliances and progress on the issue. That is, what an expanded model of learning communities could provide is a sense of how community building actually works – its difficulties and its successes.

For us, a learning community would serve as a place where students participated and worked within a variety of settings. To a great extent, we endorse the vision of the university community provided by Boyer:

> What I'm describing might be called the "New American College," an institution that celebrates teaching and selectively supports research, while also taking special pride in its capacity to connect thought to action, theory to practice. This New American College would organize cross-disciplinary institutes around pressing social issues. Undergraduates at the college would participate in field projects, relating ideas to real life. Classrooms and laboratories would be extended to include health clinics, youth centers, schools and government offices. Faculty members would build partnerships with practitioners who would, in turn, come to campus as lecturers and student advisers.

In the remainder of this article, we hope to contrast these differing visions of the "university" by discussing two classes we jointly conceived and taught at Temple University. The first collaboration was part of a traditional learning community; the second was a class with a public school-based experience as a requirement.

Learning Communities: Traditionally Defined

In the fall of 1998, we were asked to participate for the first time in a learning community linking and introductory psychology class, an introductory writing course, and a freshman seminar. In addition to us, the community also featured a Teaching Assistant from English as well as a professor and second Teaching Assistant from psychology. The grouping was fortuitous. The English teaching Assistant and us had studied Freud in terms of cultural theory. This approach would serve as a nice "foil" to the more cognitive approach of the psychology course proper. In effect, the community was interdisciplinary, featuring English, Psychology, and Rhetoric. Since the psychology course appeared to have a set curriculum, we used the writing course as a space to discuss how these two fields interacted. The freshman seminar was framed by the program as a one-credit course focusing on traditional study skills and college life.

As a team, we met several times during the semester, collaborated on a traditional rigorous academic curriculum and often discussed the progress of individual students. Since the writing course was named "Introduction to Academic Discourse," students were expected to write papers that demonstrated an ability to read and critique university writing. This served as a useful supplement to the psychology course, which consisted primarily multiple of choice tests. In fact, one of the benefits to the community was its ability to let students "try on" the different languages of psychology and learn to work within their paradigms and restraints. In addition to this goal, the freshman seminar instructor had a strong background in both subjects and often "helped" students with content in their other courses.

Beyond this collaboration, all the instructors from the linked courses (Psychology, Introduction to Academic Discourse) came to the freshman seminar to model an academic conversation and debate. This debate allowed students to see how the different disciplinary communities would frame the use/misuse of psychological categories. By most accounts, we did many of the components recommended by learning community advocates.

Yet, upon reflection, we came to see the course as something less than a success. First, the freshman seminar, despite the strong connection to the core content areas classes came to feel more and more disconnected to anything "real" in the students' lives. Rather than serving as a mechanism through which students could integrate their studies into other elements of the university (support centers, student groups, etc.), many students understood the course as unimportant. Or more accurately, they could see the utility of learning about the university's resources, but they were not being convinced about the usefulness of the university, as an institution.

The syllabus certainly compounded this problem. In the spirit of introducing students to the "university language," Freud became a centerpiece of the writing classroom. Coupled with the cognitive approach to psychology, students were certainly gaining a model of liberal arts education. Unfortunately, the assignments in both classes, continually asked the students to imagine their writing goal as negotiating between these different camps-- a negotiation that began to feel like wordplay, instead of real work. Interdisciplinarity became similar to the Odyssey's Symplegades, the clashing rock islands confronting Odysseus's ships. The disciplines became objects coming at them from both ends. In this environment, interdisciplinarity was not an opportunity to consider how this knowledge reflected back upon the students' other communities; it was not a chance for them to understand themselves as both inside/outside communities simultaneously.

Instead, the question became "Could they pass through the "Symplegades"? By the last couple of weeks, when this group of instructors and students are suppose to feel like a community of scholars -- more attached to each other and to the university -- our group was counting the days until this would be over. There were individual successes, to be sure. But for the most part, we felt that there was a good idea here somewhere, but try as we had, we had not succeeded in accessing it. In the end, while we were all sympathetic to many of its goals, we all doubted whether we would teach in a similarly structured learning community again.

Learning/Communities: A K-16 Example

One year after the Learning Community course, we were approached by the Philadelphia Education Fund (PEF). As part of PEF's work to create "rigorous language arts for all," they were developing a new type of writing course for sixth and seventh grade students in the Philadelphia Public Schools. Traditionally, these grades had been asked to do little writing, in general, and almost no writing about actual books. PEF was looking to partner with another educational institution to solve this problem. After discussions, Temple Unversity's Parks, as director of the Institute for the Study of Literature, Literacy, and Culture, and Shorr, as Director of School and Community Partnerships agreed to work with PEF and Stoddard Fleisher Middle School.

As with the Learning Community model, we met as team to discuss to develop a common educational plan. What made this work intriguing was not that it was interdisciplinary, but that it was an inter-community. As educators, we were forced to confront problems of differing language use, worldviews, and concrete institutional goals (K-12 state/city standards and university degree requirement.) After much discussion, we formulated a model where an entry-level writing course would be linked with two middle school classrooms. The students in the college class would study the nature and politics of literacy instruction, with a special emphasis on inner city education. The students at Stoddard would study issues of race and multicultural identity. Each class would be required to write frequent papers, with revisions and peer review required.[5]

As part of the course, the college students would serve as writing coaches for the middle school students; one-on-one tutoring sessions and trips to the Stoddard were built into the curriculum. For seven consecutive Fridays, that is, the university students met with students and talked with them about their writing. They discussed the paper with the student and then wrote up the results of that discussion. (This work and the write-ups later became a useful tool to talk about revision, note taking, and analysis in the university writing course.) The following week, the same students met again to discuss how the revision went. Public school teachers and students felt the need to do the work since the university students were coming; conversely, university students felt the need to respond seriously since they knew their words would create work for others.

A central element of this plan was the commitment by PEF to a support person, Carlton Jordan, a former public school teacher. In the Learning Community model, the freshman seminar instructor's expertise was relegated to tours of writing centers and outlining how to take notes – skills students certainly needed to learn, but were decidedly unmotivated to acquire since they were unconvinced of the relevance of a "university education." Here the support person acted as a liaison between the two communities -- offering advice on how to increase writing instruction in the public school classroom and offering insights into public education in the college classroom. The ability of this person to move between the different communities (adolescent public school students, college students, public school faculty/administrators, university faculty/administrators) was a key element in the program. He served as a translator between groups while we were still learning each other's language. He assisted in developing the new "community" language which allowed us to work. This is not to say that all moments were smooth, but instead to highlight the usefulness of the conflicts and debates that such a structure produced. As Peck, et al, write, the value of such intercultural communication is it "brings together people who normally do not sit down and solve problems together. The question is how to create an atmosphere of respect, a commitment to equity, and an acknowledgment of the multiple forms of expertise at the table."

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[5] We recognize that some institutions, such as Portland University, have integrated service learning components into their Freshman Learning Communities. Perhaps what distinguishes our model from Portland is the way in which instruction in academic writing was maintained as a primary educational goal to be learned in the course. We would argue, in fact, that the K-16 connection, with the need to teach basic literacy skills to younger students, heightened the understanding by our university students for special instruction in writing.

We would argue that this acknowledgment of "multiple forms of expertise" resulted in many of the goals of the traditional learning community. The university students, by travelling to and from the middle school, developed relationships outside of class. Sharing car rides, discussing certain middle school students, feeling responsible for someone's education, created a bond that lasted beyond the school term. (In fact, almost half the students in class went back to work at Stoddard the next term or, due to scheduling conflicts, asked to go to a different school). They also developed bonds with the teachers; hallway conversations about a student, turned into calls and general discussion about education.

Indirectly, and as a result of this project, university students learned about the need for support centers and peer advice. Having created a "writing center" at Stoddard, they began to inquire themselves if Temple had similar organizations -- hence a discussion of the writing/math centers grew from their conceptions of what a university should provide. Similarly, student groups, peer counseling centers, and more came to have meaning as they discussed the needs of inner-city middle school students, and discovered themselves in many of the discussions.

Most importantly, the university students began to see themselves as having expertise. On the one hand, they were " just students." At Stoddard, however, they were able to relate to the students as experts. They understood what it meant to sit in an urban classroom. They came to see themselves as Stoddard students saw them – individuals who knew how to attend and succeed at college. Although they would often doubt their own writing abilities, as they explained to the middle schools students how to revise, they realized they knew quite a bit about "academic discourse." They also came to see the need to learn more. In fact, it is important to note that both the university and public school faculty saw a pronounced improvement in student writing, both in quantity and quality. Students wrote more, revised more, and succeeded more than had typically been the case. (A similar model was also developed for English 40: Introduction to Academic Discourse where the students worked with elderly immigrants studying to pass their citizenship test which was also successful.)

We would argue that this sense of expertise would not have occurred in traditional learning communities that position the student as someone who must give up their community in exchange for entrance into another world. Only when the classroom is linked to multiple communities can students authentically bring in their expertise to the classroom. It is this authentic inter-community work which gives students a stake in their education and in the education of others. Rather than being a community of the same club, this project allowed them to express their differences around a common project -- the rehabilitation of a neighborhood classroom. In that sense, a richer community was built than one just for learning. A community was built for the future.

All the participants mourned the passing of this project. When the initial seven weeks were up, the class voted to continue indefinitely. At the end of the term, a party was held at the public school cafeteria, cards/letters were exchanged. Conversations linking kids, university students, and teachers went on past the allotted time. As noted above, some students still go there to tutor. A second offering of this project resulted in twice as many students enrolling and making a time commitment beyond what was "normally required." This time the community of university learners included freshman, sophomores, and juniors offering more opportunity for mentoring and advice. Coupled with the excitement of the Stoddard students and teachers, the community, it appeared, had taken on a life of its own. [6]

Learning Inside/Outside Communities

Our experience, no doubt, has its unique qualities. Perhaps we are too close to the project at this point to see its faults. We would argue, however, that certain common principles might be drawn from this experience about how to re-create "learning communities" at urban university settings. To return to the earlier rubrics provided by Love and Tokuno, we might suggest the following "friendly amendments." A learning community should consist of the following:

a. a common cohort of students, faculty, and non-university based learners engaged in the same educational/community project;

b. an interdisciplinary team of faculty and non-university based educators teaching the course, jointly defining the educational goals and "community" needs;

c. students and project participants forming study groups, spending time socializing outside of class, and/or sharing strategies for success;

d. collaborative activities that require faculty/administration/students/non university participants to work together and intentionally practice skills such as communication, cooperation, and/or conflict resolution;

e. these elements must occur simultaneously.

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[6] Indeed, in the fall of 2000, this expanded conception of "learning communities" will be developed within the traditionally defined program at Temple University. Here the course will link English 40: Introduction to Academic Discourse, a Women's Studies Course, and a Freshman Seminar. In this case, however, the freshman seminar will be used to articulate the needs of various partners and to develop an intercultural way of speaking.

We would only highlight one final point, implicit in the above criteria. A "Learning Community," as with all communities must respect and integrate the expertise of its members. Seeing individuals as "students" or "faculty" or as only members of a "neighborhood" is ultimately a self-limiting possibility on how communities can be created and grown. For learning to occur, individuals must see how their multiple communities and expertise can be brought to bear on a recognized community need. Then, in the most profound sense, a learning community is produced.

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A Learning Community Freshman Seminar

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Abstract: The Freshman Seminar experience encapsulates many features of a learning community: it promotes group work, involves entering students in the new "community" of the university, and encourages reflection. This essay describes the establishment of Freshman Seminars at Temple, and then turns to the author's three-year experience in teaching the seminar, which was linked with courses in Sociology and English Composition.

The Freshman Seminar experience described here was a unique one, involving students who faced severe academic challenges. The seminar succeeded in building a sense of involvement, and grades turned out to be marginally higher than predicted. Students praised the seminar for making available a range of Temple services conveniently available, a meaningful accolade in a large and sometimes impersonal urban school: clearly one strength of the seminar is that is brings key service providers from all around Temple into the classroom. They particularly praised the undergraduate peer instructor, making clear that this innovation of the Freshman Seminar program is a positive one.

The experience of teaching this class spurs reflection about the proper focus of seminar activities. It may be that more urgent and concentrated intervention is required when students are academically challenged as they were in this course: "career choice" may be a luxury compared to the need for training in academic subjects.

Background: an idea actualized

"Learning community" is a strikingly ambiguous term: a community in which students learn, a site in which one learns about community, a community that itself engages in learning. In this case, looking at the "real thing," the learning community in the flesh, provides no

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assistance in disambiguating the initial impression. In Temple University's Learning Communities program, one

finds a wide range of experiences:

- Common cohorts of students study two or more subjects: at one level, this familiarity by itself, even without much pedagogical intervention, helps the students to know each other better and work more effectively: they are a "community that learns."
- The course configurations emphasize "learning about community," learning how to create a more effective social organism.
- Reflection and reflexivity in the learning setting are emphasized: reflection in the sense of reflective practice, with students reviewing and discussing their classwork with a third party or with their classmates; reflexivity in the sense of using the knowledge that has been gained to improve their own performance. In this sense, it is the communities that are learning how to learn.

One tool we have used at Temple to maximize gains in all three of the areas above is the Freshman Seminar attached to a Learning Community. In this essay I will report on successes and challenges over three years of Freshman Seminar teaching, linking that to the more general use of these courses at Temple.

The seminar itself began at Temple as a natural adjunct to the introduction of the Learning Communities program in 1993. Once the program began, we recognized that learning communities were only one part of a larger learning paradigm that also featured supplemental instruction and the Freshman Seminar, among other activities. The Freshman Seminar had, in fact, been a desideratum of various Temple units from the late 1980s, but the combination of diplomacy and drive to actualize this desire came about only with the institution of Learning

Communities, which took the lead first in negotiating permission for one-credit courses--previously forbidden in some university units--and then in installing the courses themselves.

Trial Freshman Seminars in the 1996-97 academic year led to more widespread use of the course in the following year and also encouraged two undergraduate colleges to begin offering and requiring their own Seminars. The course meets for 10 weeks, two hours weekly, for one unit of academic credit. Teachers for the seminar come from varied Temple offices: they include academic advisers, administrators, and full-time faculty. Course content and teaching style vary from instructor to instructor, but there is a universal commitment to the twin goals of introducing students to Temple and assisting their integration within the institution: students should finish the seminar both knowing "how things work," and wanting to persevere in their education. The seminar at Temple is taught without compensation, so for many faculty it constitutes an overload. (At some other institutions this course is heavily subsidized.)

One of the most important innovations of the Temple Freshman Seminar is the use of undergraduate peer co-teachers. The peer teacher concept arrived at Temple relatively late, and--like the seminar itself--took some effort to institutionalize. After four years of team teaching with undergraduate peers, an idea that had perhaps seemed idealistic or unachievable has become an established reality, with peer teachers being selected through a competitive application process open to upperclassmen in any undergraduate program.

A Freshman Seminar in Action

The ambiguities inherent in the term "learning community," mentioned in the first sentence of this essay, all became salient in the Freshman Seminars I have taught: these include straightforward association, conscious group formation, reflective consideration of the learning experience, learning about being a community, and reflexive absorption of lessons learned. In the fall of 1999, this seminar was linked with English 40 and Sociology 50, typical courses for incoming Temple students and taught by seasoned teachers:

English 40: Introduction to Academic Discourse. In a complex screening process, about 25% of incoming freshmen who need intensive training in writing are placed in English 40. English 40 was the product of a reform of Temple's writing programs in the early 1990s. Designed as a "developmental" course, it carries four rather than three academic credits and involves a fairly intense regimen of writing, conferencing, and revision. Students in our Freshman Seminar were distributed between two sections of English 40, one taught by Rachel Bright, a seasoned graduate student and Teaching Assistant, the other by Eli Goldblatt, an associate professor of English and Director of the University Writing Program. Another writing course, English 50 was also attached to Professor Delaney's class in an additional Learning Community with its own Freshman Seminar.

> *Sociology 50: Individual and Society.* This is the general introductory course in Sociology. Our students were all placed in a section taught by Kevin Delaney, an associate professor. Professors Delaney and Goldblatt have not only built exceptional reputations as teachers but have published about their teaching experiences.
>
> *Freshman Seminar 50.* I was the lead teacher in this course. The peer teacher was Melissa Flores, a junior in Temple's College of Education who has won a string of honors and awards for academic performance.

Taken as a whole, this was one of the more dedicated and talented groups of undergraduate teachers Temple had to offer.

Building a syllabus. The Temple Freshman Seminar uses a template syllabus that can be altered by individual instructors as they individualize their courses. All sections of the seminar used a version of a common text dealing with the intellectual and social challenges of college life: Carol Carter, Sarah Lyman Kravits, and Carol Ozee, *Keys to Success at Temple University*

(Boston: Prentice-Hall, 1998). The Table of Contents of this book was customized for Temple, and the text includes a chapter on Temple's Learning Communities. Melissa Flores and I designed a ten-week seminar that would prepare students in the most critical areas in this text. But from the start we had other goals for the course as well: we hoped to use this course not only to introduce students to Temple, to maximize both student involvement and student learning.

Students also had to do work from their sociology text for this class. The Sociology 50 text was Eitzen and Zinn, *In Conflict and Order. Understanding Society*[7]. We used this book fairly extensively with our seminar, in an effort to enhance student learning in the sociology class. Typical exercises included note taking on reading and on Professor Delaney's lectures, with reference back to the text to confirm difficult points. These samples of written work were marked to show students the importance of well-organized notes.

The syllabus we created reflected a number of different goals, which I have broken up into three groups for the purposes of this essay:

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[7] D. Stanley Eitzen and Maxine Baca Zinn, In Conflict and Order: Understanding Society. Eighth edition. Needham Heights, Massachusetts. 8th edition, July, 1997.

Introduction to college life	Involvement in college life	Success in academic courses
Time management presentation	Photographs: on the first day of class, we photographed every student, as an aid to learning their names as fast as possible.	Class on the importance of the syllabus: reading and using a syllabus
Academic honesty presentation	Homecoming activity planning	Taking notes on a book (using a chapter from Eitzen and Zinn)
Career Services presentation, résumé, writing, practice in career research on web	Homecoming banner	Taking notes on a lecture (in Sociology 50)
Career interviews		Preparing for an examination (in Sociology 50)
Papers on career choices		Making an oral presentation
Academic advising visit to build course selection skills		Library research exercise
Financial aid presentation		
Counseling Services presentation on stress management		

College Life. With the activities in the left hand column we attempted to give students some acquaintance with topics they would need to control during the next four years: how to deal with financial aid matters, university-level plagiarism standards, time management at the college level. The goal of these activities was not to provide comprehensive knowledge of university resources, but to help students locate these services on campus. To some degree we involved other offices in these classes, and students built up substantial files of information about the assistance these units could provide.

Student Involvement. The central column, though short, describes multi-week activities that benefited the class far more than we expected. Who would have thought that creating a banner for a football game would be as exciting and involving as this turned out to be? Reflecting on the activity, it is clear that this seemingly Rotarian experience kindled something in our students' consciousnesses that their cynical and removed teacher had absolutely failed to comprehend. It is also clear that this activity would not have taken off but for the hard work of the undergraduate peer teacher, Melissa Flores, who alternately cajoled and pushed the class into producing a very attractive Homecoming banner that won fourth prize out of a substantial number of entries.

Vincent Tinto and others, discussing college drop-out rates, have noted the importance of a "sense of involvement" as a motivation to stay enrolled. This is a social feature of higher education that often gets ignored. It was extremely interesting to discover just how involved students can become, given the right stimuli. Some students who had been relatively shy pitched in on the project. All seemed eager to contribute, spending time outside of class to produce an attractive banner. The rhythm of the class picked up at this point, spilling over into other positive interactions among the students.

Academic Success Freshman seminar populations vary radically in their ability levels. Many of our students had already been through a Temple summer program for weaker students. We decided that our seminar should emphasize training for academic success, and devoted substantial time to assisting students with their sociology course. Student note-taking, exam preparation and paper writing all got substantial attention in our class. In addition, we worked with Professor Delaney to provide extra help to his weaker students.

The Seminar and its Linked Courses: a Running Conversation

The seminar instructors planned the course in meetings with Professors Delaney and Goldblatt and with Rachel Bright. We then kept a running correspondence throughout the term. Months after the course, what stands out in these exchanges is the teachers' ongoing concern both with pedagogy in the strict sense and also with student motivation, attitude, and ability. Early in the course we noticed that some students were applying themselves seriously--not just doing the day-to-day work, but setting out to achieve a goal. Others persisted in behaviors perhaps learned in high school, putting off assignments, skipping classes, and failing to take the enterprise of learning seriously. Some students came to their instructors with problems while a few others disappeared for extended periods of time. And in general, the students who under performed in one class in the community under performed in the others.

A key part of the faculty collaboration was the regular e-mail correspondence about course details and particularly about problem students. Faculty kept in constant touch during the term, focusing in particular on problem students. Writing in the seventh week of the term, Professor Delaney reported his efforts to help his students with a writing assignment: "What I did was help them write a thesis paragraph together, then plan a strategy for how to frame the essay. Then, it was up to them to carry it out. They did much better [than on an earlier paper]. I wanted them to have a concrete example of how to write a social science essay. Of course, the proof will be in whether they can continue this in Essay #3. My guess is some will and some won't."

This account is representative of Professor Delaney's deliberate and generous pedagogy. He and others on the teaching team, however, experienced difficulty when students lost the will to perform. In a sense, this problem of motivation was more challenging than the pedagogy. Our "involvement" strategy succeeded with students who maintained interest. Morale-boosting measures, conferencing, and extra instruction had a differential effect all played a role in this effort. Students who failed to appear learned less and risked failure. Rachel Bright worried about her students at one point:

> As far as individuals go, I've had the same issues with Jean [real student names are suppressed throughout this essay], who disappeared, and Susan. She has not spoken to me at all about why. James' papers have My mantra of "come to class on time, ask me if you have any questions, go to the Writing Center if you keep getting Ds, and if you don't do the homework, you won't do well in class" didn't rub of on these guys. Even my warnings about attendance and the need to improve their paper grades didn't sink in at all. I have told both of them that they can continue coming to class and getting feedback on their writing in preparation for taking the class over next semester--a pretty safe offer to make since I also pointed out that they could take the extra time for their other courses. … I found it frustrating that a combination of unforeseen personal calamities (out of my control & the students') and absences (not having work done, not understanding the attendance policy?) caused several students to withdraw, with others' work noticeably diminishing. The usual "not doing enough" feeling … was thus compounded.

Eli Goldblatt, an expert on student writing problems, also felt challenged by this group:

> I found my class pretty weak as writers, but about half of them pulled themselves through the semester creditably. I gave no A's, a B+, 2 B's, 1 B-, 2 C+'s, 2 C's, 1 C-, 2 R's & 3 students gave up on the course (I think mostly for financial reasons). The people I passed showed enough improvement & understanding of the writing process that I thought they could pass Eng 50 [the next course in the writing sequence]…. I learned a lot from this group but it was not an uplifting semester for me with them--I always felt I wasn't doing enough, but I guess that's true more semesters than not.

"I always felt I wasn't doing enough": a group of seasoned teachers ended the semester somewhat frustrated at having achieved less than they expected. They--or we, since I was one of the group-- may find some solace in recognizing that the group as a whole did better than was expected: what was a disappointment to us could be viewed as a moderate success from another point of view. The Freshman Seminar, and the fairly intense communication among dedicated faculty about particular students, arguably saved this cohort from a wholly disastrous first term at university. But it was a highly qualified and ambiguous salvation.

Doing the Numbers

Seeking to build a nuanced and meaningful portrait of the Freshman Seminar experience, staff conducted a course evaluation and collaborated with assessment personnel. James Degnan, Acting Director of Temple's Office of Measurement and Research, has developed substantial measures of student performance in the seminars that include a broad-based formula predicting GPA that relies on placement scores, responses to a freshman questionnaire, and information from secondary schools. We found that our concern about student ability was confirmed by this data: of 22 seminars, ours had the lowest predicted GPA: 1.82. That the class grade point average after the fall term was actually 2.03--essentially a "C" average--could from this point of view be considered a success. And the median for the class was 2.31, meaning that half the students scored at that level or higher.

At the same time, the Measurement and Research staff confirmed what we had feared all along: several of our students were in deep trouble. Five had grade point averages below 1.0, 7 more fell below 2.0. Part of the class, then, was clearly endangered and may never graduate.

The news of our class's predicted Grade Point Average raised new questions. We wondered if students gain from being placed in so homogeneous a group. There is a sense, particularly in developmental courses, in which group morale can suffer if too many students perform poorly. One upshot of the Measurement and Research findings, then, was that we decided to pay closer attention to how students were selected for seminars in the future.

Conclusion: What have we Learned?

This Freshman Seminar was an important pedagogical experience, bringing teachers together with each other and with a group of students who were as interesting as they were challenged. The teachers in the program have maintained relationships with several of these students long after the course completed. It was also a research experience, generating data on student performance that may be useful in the future.

The student evaluations reveals that one of the chief perceived merits of the class was neither the section on careers nor the drill on note-taking, but the convenient scheduling of various obligations: our sessions on financial aid, advising, and computer training were the most popular activities. Without the seminar, students would have had to go out and schedule these on their own. The class also noted the two teachers' availability and enthusiasm, and enthusiastically praised the undergraduate peer teacher: clearly the presence of a mediating figure from their own age group was more meaningful to the class than instructors may appreciate.

One interesting finding from Measurement and Research was that this seminar, a group that clearly required a careful introduction to university studies, was taking more demanding courses than some others. A large proportion of the students declared themselves interested in pursuing medicine or some are of health studies such as physical therapy. Four class members took the exceptionally demanding general chemistry course: three failed, while one earned an A-!

Leaving aside the student with the A-, the serious question arises, what can a seminar teacher do to help shape a student's academic choices? Few topics are touchier, given the hold that careers in medicine have on the student consciousness. There is a fine line between informing students about academic fields that have some promise for them, and telling them they're simply "not fit" for a career in this area. But the topic is too important to ignore, and we shall have to return to it in the future.

"Careers" in another sense may have been a weak link in the course as we taught it. Students engaged in career interviews, seeking out people in fields they were considering, delivering oral reports on their findings, and then writing these up for final papers. Could this time have been better spent supporting student academic work, in Sociology and English? Perhaps so. There is an argument that a Freshman Seminar for a developmental population should concentrate first and foremost on academic success. It may be, too, that the seminar was simply trying to be too many things to too many people. The threefold obligation to improve student learning, build student involvement, and review possible career choices is a heavy assignment for a these students, particularly in a one-credit class. Several class members did better than expected but it may be that the broad course goals reduced student success. A few weeks of intensive work on the academic courses may turn out to have more positive effects, especially if carefully coordinated with the teachers of those courses.

If we overemphasized the career segment, we seem to have done well with the banner contest, which visibly invigorated the class and built the crucial sense of involvement. This was one element of a good socialization model that brought students together and built relationships.

In sum, the Freshman Seminar is a powerful tool for bringing students into the university, and for bringing faculty together to promote student success. Our students did slightly better than might have been expected in their first semester of university life. Achieving more in the future will require even closer collaboration with the teachers of the academic courses, and careful efforts to use the seminar to support learning in these courses. This year, the seminar was taught with a great deal of enthusiasm, but more intensive faculty study of these courses may be necessary to win the learning gains to which we aspire. Also required is careful coordination with advisers to achieve the best possible mix of students in these sections, and continued emphasis on positive team-building activities that enhance student involvement at Temple University.

Experience Keeps A Dear School

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Abstract: As high technology turns the world into a global city, the American workplace grows ever more diverse. The historic process calls for college curriculums that promote cooperative learning.

Late in his life, toward the end of the eighteenth century, Benjamin Franklin got a handle on a tool for living. Philadelphia's most renowned resident learned to think outside of a terrible box that has taxed the country since its conception. He picked up a skill that today's college students could use to launch rewarding careers in a world that grows smaller everyday. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. did centuries later, Franklin achieved the ability to judge others by the content of their character rather than the color of their skin. If schools, seeking to disseminate such knowledge, establish ways for youth to experience a rainbow of humanity and recognize how appearances can deceive, they will become invaluable in the twenty-first century because the institutions will graduate individuals prepared to communicate with a steady stream of strangers whom they are bound to meet in the workplace of the new millennium.

The whole planet is shrinking into a big city and as a result the entire country is contracting into a single ward. Technological advances unprecedented in scope have spurred the development. Electronic instruments like the personal computer, satellite dish, and wireless phone are putting everyone instantly in touch with everyone else under the sun. As the author of *Being Digital* recognizes, the Internet is an excellent example of a high-tech invention with the virtual impact of an appliance that compresses the distance between people around the world.

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According to him, the medium "is creating a totally new, global social fabric" (183). No doubt, in many ways, contact with men and women from different places is growing very routine.

Satellites allowed television networks to provide live coverage of this new century's dawn in one global time zone after another. Without leaving their homes, viewers encountered an array of faces and fashions which in earlier times would have remained unknown to them unless they managed to sail the Seven Seas. Technology has current events everywhere happening in everyone's backyard. Nowadays, seconds after a hurricane strikes, an earthquake hits, or a war erupts anywhere, it is broadcast worldwide. A century ago, it would have taken months at least to spread the news oceans beyond the cry of an eyewitness. Shortly, it will take a flight to Mars to turn a deaf ear to world affairs.

In the wake of the Cold War, perched at the fore of what Alvin Toffler has imagined as "the third wave" in history, the United States enters an age where citizens will confront a need to collaborate with a broad human spectrum on a daily basis. Cable companies like CNN and MTV have relayed to the four corners of the earth famed myths about the land that have appealed to "huddled masses yearning to breathe free." With related systems, the organizations have served to excite an influx of immigrants who are greatly changing the country's composition into a highly varied mosaic. While whites have long made up the majority and blacks have formed the major minority on the national scene, the equation is undergoing a radical shift. Since the reform of immigration laws in 1965, the number of Americans with Asian origins has increased until the total has multiplied to over ten percent of the population. Moreover, Farai Chideya reports in *The Color of Our Future*, the Census Bureau predicts that "Latino Americans will surpass blacks as the largest nonwhite group by 2005" (5). A world of difference unfolds. Given prevailing trends, by 2050, in the words of Chideya, "whites will be a minority, and minorities will be in the majority" (4).

Obsolescence encroaches upon everything in use at a more and more rapid rate. The surrounding circumstances are switching workplaces into high-tech enterprises that bank on being primed to please a clientele consisting of every color on the planet. Under the circumstances, it will pay to know heuristic techniques. Yet, it will pay more to value human tolerance too. The first form of knowing will secure gainful employment; the second one will start and sustain terrific careers. On the whole, trades in demand coupled with a respect for others will determine futures in the new era.

II

Olaudah Equiano came to America in 1756. Kidnapped from a resolute and resourceful village in the kingdom of Benin, at the age of thirteen, he arrived in chains on a slave ship. The speech and manners of the territory, especially toward him, left him flustered, if not frightened at first. But the African set out to understand them and managed to succeed. Working for a merchant on ships out of Philadelphia, he studied the language of the region as well as the livelihood of his owner. He learned enough to start his own business on the side. At twenty-one, he purchased his freedom with pounds saved from pennies earned. Although the African wanted to enjoy his independence in the land, he decided to try his luck at living abroad in England because prejudice against his color was rampant in America and would never permit him to realize his ambition.

On this side of the Atlantic, while heady, hard-working, and honest, Equiano generally felt like someone on the verge of drowning in rough surfs mustered by the belief that blacks like him fall below whites on the scale of human worth. The negative regard for his kind was upheld by Thomas Jefferson in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* when he asserted that they are very soulful, but not sensible. A white solidarity rallied around the premise that blacks count as opposites lacking the necessities to benefit from learning and blossom in liberty for want of reason. It cost blacks a ton of golden opportunities to rise in society, which paid a heavy price itself. By restricting black contributions to the culture, the country missed a chance to savor a more bountiful fare. By shortchanging Equiano and other blacks in the same boat, the community pinched everyone with a stake in its life.

Successive generations of college students could read Equiano's published narrative of his personal history as a cautionary tale against writing people off on account of their color. Assuming that Mark Twain was right when he wrote, "Training is everything" (84), assigning students the African's work, entitled *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789), along with *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1791), will prompt them to look past the skins in which others appear to the heart of what makes them tick. The two texts feature a common character who, against all odds, through steady digging, uncovers the settled grounds for growth in the country, and then, seeking to play by the rules, he pursues industry, intelligence, and integrity, until he sees his lot improved by leaps and bounds. Together the books tell that Equiano and Franklin were born alike and turned akin in thought, but a hitch contrived by bias freed the latter to reach leagues further than the former and provide miles more service to society. Seeing the sameness, despite the difference, between the stories, will teach students to treasure the claim that the suit does not shape the solicitor.

In America, the fallacious notion that blacks come into the world to live at the mercy of whites provoked resistance to Equiano's business ventures and subjected them to fraud and violence. Such faulty reasoning with its related social injustice has persisted throughout the nation's history. It spawned widespread civil unrest during the late 1960's. Colleges across the country responded by reforming, among other things, their curriculums to include courses dedicated to the study of black books like Equiano's slave narrative. Unfortunately, classes designed to cover the material have most often examined it in isolation from other American letters and treated it as an instance of counter cultural expression. As a result, students have been rendered liable to consider the typical course on African-American literature an exotic excursion to the margins of the mainstream meant solely to acquaint them with difference. Preempting dialogue about attributes common to blacks as well as whites, the academic offerings have left students inadequately prepared to foster agreements for the sake of the general welfare in the historic workplace of the new millennium.

To stay worth the price of the ticket in the future, colleges will want to adopt a range of comparative approaches to the study of African-American literature and culture. For example, they will wish to have seminars that look at white works like Franklin's autobiography in connection with black books such as Equiano's manuscript. The strategy would ready students to spot unity in the midst of diversity and tackle the challenge of collaborating with an assortment of colors in the corporate America that awaits them. A particularly useful course would match the foregoing black and white publications with memoirs written by Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans. By encouraging students to practice putting themselves in someone else's shoes and seeing the other's side of things, no matter how that person may look, it could groom students to become professionals with the capacity to cooperate with countless colleagues and clients.

III

Neither Franklin nor Equiano had any problem with slavery when he was young. Events in their lives changed both of their minds. The conversion happened swiftly in the African's case. It took his white contemporary much longer to undergo the transformation. Each metamorphosis, however, demonstrates that diverse relations yield deep respect for others.

The natives of Essaka, Equiano's birthplace in Benin, never gave the issue of human bondage a second thought. Like the bulk of provinces in Old World kingdoms, his village was a traditional society based on an agrarian economy ruled by a hereditary patriarchy with a pecking order supposedly decreed by nature. While the inhabitants swore that everything comes from the same source, they fought for power over their neighbors and summoned the others to serve them when they beat them in battle. Equiano was born into the ruling class; essentially a local Brahmin raised him in a household loaded with slaves, won in wars. The African was destined to follow in his father's footsteps until rival warriors snatched him from his surroundings and cast him into a channel of the Atlantic Slave Trade. By the time that he reached the Virginian shore, he had sampled enough of slavery to rate it a bane to humanity especially ruinous in America where a prevalent inclination to associate dark skins with brutality forged it into "a new refinement in cruelty" (58). He continued to see it like that after he bought his way out of bondage and obtained work on ships that carried him from Philadelphia, Savannah, and Kingston to harbors in Nicaragua, England, and Turkey, in addition to several other ports around the world. All of his travels strengthened the conviction that human skins come in numerous tones, but human souls are pitched alike and merit everyone a chance to chart his or her own course in life.

Equiano's mature outlook was a far cry from Franklin's early perspective. The white American was born in Boston when the elite still kept slaves in their homes; when he first arrived by boat in the City of Brotherly Love, the commerce on the waterfront included slave auctions. Nothing in his experience swayed him to perceive any sameness between blacks and whites. Therefore, it is understandable that, in 1733, at twenty-five, Franklin published in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* a piece entitled "Blackamore, on Molatto Gentlemen," which scoffs at mulattos who strive to be seen as blue bloods, since, the article states, "they are next to Negroes, and but just above 'em" (219) with a "natural Sphere" (220) that falls below the proper orbit for whites at the zenith of the social order. After he succeeded in business, he moved into a fine new house in 1748 and for no less than thirty more years stocked the residence with several slaves with names like Jemima, Othello, and King. No wonder, his "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, etc.," an essay written in 1751, contains a wish to exclude all people of color from the country in order to stop them from soiling the land.

Twelve years before the Thirteen Colonies declared themselves independent of the British Crown, a senseless white slaughter of a respectable Native American population adjacent to the city sparked a rage that pushed Franklin publicly to betray an emerging shift in his opinion of nonwhites as he advocated human rights for aboriginals. A year earlier in the wake of a visit to a school for black youth, he confessed in private correspondence that he had "conceiv'd a higher Opinion of the natural Capacities of the black Race, than [he] had ever before entertained" and he now saw them "in every Respect equal" (800) to whites. Indeed, tours of more and more unfamiliar locales at home and abroad, including Canada, Ireland, and France, elicited by his affairs, gradually worked like a charm to distance Franklin from white chauvinism. By 1772, in London, he was happy to hear from Anthony Benezet that "the Disposition against keeping [slaves] grows more general in North America" (876). During the next decade, he penned his "Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America," which finds Native Americans at least as civilized as whites; he followed that theme with his "Information to Those Who Would Remove to America," which credits a black cry against inequality with capturing the spirit of the land. Without question, Franklin came to detect a certain similarity about human beings of every complexion. The clearest proof resides in the fact that he was elected to the presidency of the Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society in his twilight years. Excluding his *Autobiography*, the last three public things that he wrote, before he passed away, supported liberty and justice for African Americans.

His altered consciousness, in unison with Equiano's, speaks volumes for the construction and maintenance of learning communities on college campuses drafted to combat color prejudice. The programs would hold considerable educational worth for students who hope to participate happily in the polychromatic establishments likely to employ them in the days that lie ahead. It would be good for the scheme to involve a rich mix of first-year students, selected from entrants in an essay contest, who would live, dine, and study together for a full term; additionally, if faculty teamed up to offer program members interdisciplinary instruction on subjects related to history, race, and culture, it would likewise be beneficial. Students could only profit from the experience. They would be hard pressed to find more useful knowledge in the twentieth-first century.

IV

In his "Plan for Improving the Condition of the Free Blacks," printed the year that he co-signed the Constitution into effect, Franklin looked for ways to aid former slaves. He nominated committees to guide and protect "free negroes" from harm, help needy ones find suitable apprenticeships in local trades, and assist by "sedulous inquiry" individuals prepared to gain "constant employment" around Philadelphia, since "the want of this would occasion poverty, idleness, and many vicious habits." Also, he appointed a council to canvass for their children "to attend regularly the schools already established in [the] city, or form others" for their private edification. Franklin dwelled on training as the key to black success. Therefore, he noted that African-American children ought to "receive such learning as is necessary for their future situation in life" (1156). At that point, he was not suggesting that the black boys and girls required special instruction; rather, he was sharing his acquired belief that the children of blacks along with all others deserved a fair chance to enjoy liberty in the future facing them through the use of applicable learning.

From early in life, Franklin thought that "wise Men in all Ages" have held "the good Education of Youth" to be "the surest Foundation of the Happiness both" (324) of individuals and nations. In his mind, a positive school experience trained students for career success in their time. Today, if he were alive, he would campaign for academic programs that prepare undergraduates to thrive in the emergent era. He would consider teaching young people to get along with others unlike them necessary for colleges to remain dear. Accordingly, he would endorse the development of research centers dedicated to enhancing "the common Stock of Knowledge" (295) about history, race, and culture; he would cite a dearth of information on the topics, stripped of ethnocentrism. Science shaded by ethnic pride, Franklin would understand, could pay in a city-state or a nation-state, but not the national ward of the global city.

Prior to the 1970's, a Eurocentric bias held sway over the educational system. The frame of reference portrayed the march of time as a drama of white conquests, the color of people as badges of personal character, and the production of art as a theater for white actors only! The calls for more ecumenical findings excited by the turbulent Sixties hit college campuses with a relentless barrage of demands for reform. This activity ran from the start of the Watergate trials to the end of the Anita Hill inquiry. Out of the movement, new disciplines, like Black Studies and Women's Studies, were born. The conception of minority-oriented fields of study improved the quality of college educations; commendably, they diversified faculties and broadened curriculums. Commissioned to define and celebrate difference, however, the new studies have been subject to leave an impression of the country as a puzzle of unconnected dots marked by a palette of disparate colors.

To help various students identify with one another and picture themselves united like the fingers of a hand joined to pick up an object, schools will want to afford them access to information banks that link multiple disciplines with an aim to spell out unity in the midst of diversity. There is going to exist a mandate for archives that connect the discoveries of distinct disciplines in order to accord students learning opportunities that eclipse ethnocentrism by comparing historical events like the rise and fall of empires in Africa, Asia, and Europe. It will be a time for think tanks that promote dialogue across the color line, which W.E.B. DuBois saw as *the* issue of the last century. Centers that sponsor associative learning will prove highly pertinent. They should in fact become imperative scholarly projects.

By the end of his life, Franklin was sure that all youth have an innate capacity to profit from learning. Still, he professed that "the best Capacities require Cultivation, [for it is] with them, as with the best Ground, which unless well tilled and sowed with profitable Seed, produces only ranker Weeds" (325). His reasoning warrants the development of research centers disposed to substantiate that the presence of difference scarcely assures the absence of sameness between discrete individuals. Franklin's logic leads to the conclusion that students will stumble in the future without the benefit of occasions to draw on academic resources designed to promote human tolerance. On the other hand, presumably, with the exposure, they will prosper and realize why, during the 1963 March on Washington, King dreamed of a trust "able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood" (82).

V

As the world gets smaller each passing day, colleges face many challenges. MIT researcher Nicholas Negroponte suspects, in the new age activated by digital technology, to survive, schools are bound to evolve into ventures comparable to "museums and playgrounds for [students] to assemble ideas and socialize with [others from] all over the world" (8). Plainly, available data indicates that colleges have entered a time when they will have to work to accommodate the interests of young people whose situations in life will be influenced by electronic innovations like the Information Superhighway. The odds favor schools programmed to grow ever more user friendly for individuals counting on cultivating the capacity to cooperate with every color in the world. A policy devised to incorporate a network of courses that mix and match various literatures and cultures to identify common bonds of humanity between different groups, like white and black Americans, will make it easier to sell a college education to youth destined to spend their lives in swells of change and diversity. Learning communities arranged to have dissimilar students live and learn together, put into operation, will grant institutions of higher education a competitive edge; still, their effectiveness will for the most part depend on input from faculties informed by research on multicultural topics. The major and most critical challenge before colleges, though, revolves around an urgency to implement practical standards for sustaining diverse student bodies. This last issue is the first matter that schools will need to address to stay attractive in the prospective educational profession.

To meet future demands, college administrators will want their campuses to look like America, teeming with myriad hues. They will have to act affirmatively to make it happen, but they should avoid resorting to the quota system inaugurated by former president Richard Nixon under the banner of Affirmative Action. The Nixon initiative was confounded by the influence of his belief that schools can find passable blacks, but not proficient ones; his position equated "qualified applicant" with "white student." It persuaded colleges to set aside specific slots for minorities and women and handle them as special cases, until the Supreme Court *Bakke* ruling raised the specter of "reverse discrimination." A new strategy is required; it must weigh how life distributes fortunes in uneven lots.

At the end of his life, Franklin trusted, to measure a student's merit, an evaluator must factor in where that individual is coming from; different students apply to college from different situations. A background check is a necessary prerequisite for the realization of any procedure contemplated unequivocally to gauge an applicant's qualifications for enrollment in a college curriculum. From Franklin's final perspective, children at birth, bar none, have the power to go far in time through the use of knowledge as naturally as they could see how to swim on their own in a body of water. When it comes to swimming, one born by the shore has an advantage over a peer raised on a bluff; similarly, when it comes to landing in college, some youth have to try to make the leap from further distances than others have to try. In "An Address to the Public," published five months before his demise, the "Founding Father" signified that a legacy of slavery should be construed an awful disadvantage for its victims in educational pursuits, for the practice customarily drops "intellectual faculties" below "the common standard of the human species," and so, he resolved, "Attention to emancipated black people, it is therefore to be hoped, will become a branch of our national policy" (1155). Standing in the shadow of death, he set an obvious precedent for the conviction that it takes more than standardized test scores and grade point averages to determine a person's true scholastic aptitude; other variables must be acknowledged such as one's socioeconomic status or historical handicaps.

Equiano's slave narrative validates the former opinion. His personal history going from slavery to freedom illustrates that anyone given a means and motive can pick up a possible way to lead a productive and prosperous life. In his memoir, the black man wrote that "understanding is not confined to feature or color" (46). He aimed to show that ordinary people without an education border a diamond in the rough; with sufficient schooling, they are certain to shine like a gem sparkling from a beautiful polish. Noting the bias that "some conceive against the natives of Africa on account of their color," Equiano offered his fellow blacks as apparent exceptions that prove a natural rule. Sensing that environments color conduct, he attributed any "apparent inferiority" of blacks among whites during his lifetime "to their situation." He asked his readers, in the era of black bondage, "Are any pains taken to teach" (45) the brutalized blacks the tongue and trades of the territory? Equiano answered, no, and alluded that you have to ponder a person's past to place his or her promise and forecast his or her future.

With the fresh winds of change cutting through the civic landscape, the recorded drift of Equiano's narrative in line with Franklin's related train of thought contains some good counsel for college admission offices. The agencies have a responsibility to embrace and exhibit diversity in their student bodies to keep their schools competitive in the new world order. They will have to make some pretty tough calls to achieve the right balance. One-size-fits-all acceptance criteria will usually fail to be satisfactory. To get the job done as well as humanly possible, scales that weigh pluck and luck over and above scores and grades will have to guide decisions. A selection process governed by that sort of standard would probably yield a student body full of individuals like Franklin and Equiano who would assist one another to equip themselves for rewarding careers.

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Notes from the Canyon Floor...a selection of essays from Portland State University

Judy Patton[8]

University Studies is in its sixth year of operation. In 1994, the initial year of the program, Freshman Inquiry (Frinq) was inaugurated. Sophomore Inquiry (Sinq) followed the next year and in each subsequent year, the cluster courses and then the senior capstone program were introduced. The result is a four-year, integrated, interdisciplinary program for general education at the university. The program focuses on student learning and is based on four goals. It employs team teaching, partnering faculty with undergraduate and graduate student mentors, active learning methodologies, the infusion of technology into the curriculum and portfolio assessment. The success of the program rests on the development of a learning community and on the ability of faculty to deliver on the promises of the curricular design. Because the program has changed the central requirements for all students, it has touched on almost every program and service in the institution.

The essays included in this collection were written by faculty and staff who have been directly involved in the design and implementation of the new program. The essays are not meant to give a complete picture of the changes that have occurred at PSU but are the result of those who answered a general call for essays. However, the essays do address key areas that have given life to the original plan crafted by an ad hoc faculty committee on general education that designed the curriculum.

The issues and concerns we had starting out are not the same as those we are experiencing now. The needs and issues involved in initiating a new program are very different from those of institutionalizing and stabilizing it. Each step of the way, we have learned way to improve our methods and strategies. However, we are continually surprised by how many new and unique situations arise in the day-to-day operations of a program attempting to focus on student learning. We have learned to live in continuous improvement and have been fortunate in our opportunities to work with other universities as we addressed our issues. We find that sharing with each other gives us insights and strategies that we would not have access to if we worked in isolation. While the institutions vary in size and organization, many of the difficulties and their solutions are the same, thus making collaboration among us particularly useful. In these essays we offer our reflections and descriptions of our work as a means for widening the circle of those engaged in improving the student experience and learning.

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Improving the Support of Writing in Learning Communities

Greg Jacob[9] and Carol Burnell[10]

Abstract

At Portland State, the goal of improving student writing has been facilitated by our emphasis on establishing learning communities both inside and out of the classroom, among students, peer mentors, graduate assistants, and faculty. These intertwining communities foster a collaborative learning environment in which our students' abilities to critically read, think, and write are supported.

Since its inception, a major goal of the RUSS project has been to focus on the improvement of student learning. Writing is one area of student learning that continues to receive much attention among the three participating universities: IUPUI, Portland State University, and Temple University. All three institutions are restructuring their commitment to undergraduate education by creating learning communities. In a learning community, students become part of a collaborative team with faculty, mentors, other students, and local community members on pragmatic, interlocking, and goal-oriented projects. At Portland State, the goal of improving student writing has been facilitated by our emphasis on establishing learning communities both inside and out of the classroom. The push toward using learning communities at Portland State has come from disparate sources: the writing program, budgetary concerns, and general education reform. In 1987, PSU had a strong writing program based on a social-epistemic theoretical stance. While students met the writing requirement through seat-time in two required courses, those courses were focused on critical reading, critical inquiry, and learning the methods and language of academic discourse. However, by 1993 PSU, like many state institutions, was experiencing budget cutbacks and a resulting loss of tenure lines. Oregon's Measure 5 property tax control legislation resulted in a 59% cut in funding for composition. The writing program and the University then faced the task of how to provide adequate writing instruction in a climate of constant budget cuts. At the same time, the trend in composition and in general education was moving towards writing across the curriculum and in the disciplines.

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[10] Carol Burnell is the Writing Center Coordinator at Portland State University. She received her BA in English at San Francisco State and her MA in English at Portland State. After teaching at local community colleges and universities in the Portland metropolitan area, Carol returned to PSU as the coordinator of the campus-wide writing center, where she trains graduate and upper-division writing consultants, works with student and community writers one-to-one, oversees the daily administration of the center, and teaches composition courses.

It was at this time that Portland State began an exciting new general education program entitled University Studies, now a nationally recognized model of curricular innovation. Focusing on reorganizing student learning experiences and improving retention, University Studies strengthens connections among students and faculty and creates greater coherence and real-world relevance into the undergraduate experience. University Studies incorporates writing as part of four major goals: communication, critical thinking, diversity, and ethics. In our first-year program, Freshman Inquiry, courses are theme-based, each theme exploring topics and issues from an interdisciplinary perspective. Each theme has a team made up of three to five faculty members from various disciplines who cooperate and collaborate on goals, assignments, and techniques. Furthermore, each faculty member works with an upper-division peer mentor chosen through a rigorous selection process. Students meet in regular class sessions with the course instructor, then meet in smaller groups with the peer mentor, each week. Such a structure is conducive to the application of the learning community concept. As the program has developed, gradually faculty, mentors, and students have made increasing use of peer response groups, peer study groups, support services such as the Writing Center, computer labs, and connections with student organizations and the community at large. In the past year, a number of learning community activities have been incorporated into Freshman Inquiry specifically to support writing.

In the same year that PSU began offering University Studies courses, the writing program also made changes that better articulated with the University Studies goal of establishing learning communities. Rather than focusing only on academic discourse or returning to a focus only on individual expression, writing courses now incorporated a social-expressivist blend. These changes in the underlying theoretical base of the program were seen in the practical realm in the move toward establishing discourse communities in writing classrooms and in text selections that included both critical readings and texts based on developing students' individual writing processes.

These changes in both theory and practice, in both the new approach to general education and in the writing program, led to the beginning of collaboration and development of learning communities among faculty. PSU is now at the point where, in addition to the collaboration across disciplines among University Studies itself, University Studies faculty from the disciplines and writing faculty work together and consult with one another to support our mutual teaching and learning goals. Our collaborations include faculty and mentor workshops and one-to-one faculty and mentor consultations with the Director of Writing and the Writing Center Coordinator.

One example of learning community activities this past year occurred before the school year began. Freshman Inquiry faculty and mentors participated in a day-long writing workshop during a week of training. Throughout the day, composition specialists offered workshops in small group settings to discuss meaningful and sequenced writing assignments, effective revision strategies, focused peer response sessions, and responding and evaluating student writing; in the larger group, participants were introduced to technology-assisted writing instruction, listened to a brief overview of the major composition theories currently in practice, and were exposed to campus resources such as the Writing Center and courses for non-native English speakers. Through this interactive dialogue and workshop format, not through lecture, faculty and mentors tackled the challenges of writing instruction in general education.

In addition to the collaboration between faculty members and mentors, in University Studies the collaborative learning process is promoted in the weekly, smaller mentor sections. Students work with one another and with the peer mentor as they read and comment upon rough drafts. As students are exposed to various invention strategies and revision techniques, the smaller mentor sections allow them the opportunity to share knowledge of what works and what doesn't, giving students the chance to sometimes be the expert.

This past year, Portland State has developed two models of support for writing instruction in University Studies. In the first, dubbed the "Integrated Model," graduate students from the "Teaching and Tutoring Writing" course assisted Freshman Inquiry courses with specific aspects of writing. These graduate students work closely with the peer mentor to develop class sessions on topics such as invention, peer response, and revision. As a result, students see learning taking place among several interlocking communities: instructor with peer mentor, peer mentor with graduate student, and peer mentor with first-year student. Student comments have ranged from "I'm not just a person handing in a piece of paper. Here, I'm a person contributing to the discussion" to "University Studies buildings a better sense of security in the university because now you know people and you don't have to worry about being alone."

Perhaps it is due to the peer mentor that first-year students do not have to "worry about being alone." The peer mentor classes become ideal learning communities because students soon learn that the mentors become friends, discussion facilitators, and role models. In particular, mentors serve as listeners, peer responders, and writing advisors. They help students become active participants in the learning and writing process, and thus in the conversation of academic discourse.

The second model supporting University Studies is, again, a collaborative system. In the "Practicum Model," the Writing Center is the collaborating partner. The Writing Center assists University Studies in two ways. In the first, personal consultations and classroom workshops are available on a variety of writing topics. Individual faculty and mentors consult with the Coordinator and with the ESL specialist in the Writing Center to brainstorm ways to respond to student writing, to work with basic writers, to assist non-native English writers, and to develop appropriate writing assignments. When providing workshops, the Coordinator and the graduate student consultants work closely with the instructor or, more commonly, with the peer mentor, to tailor a workshop to the needs of the students in the course. The second way that the Writing Center offers support is directly to students. Writers benefit from ongoing appointments with the same consultant. While many students have discovered that fact on their own, this past year Portland State offered a pilot program in which Freshman Inquiry students can receive one elective credit for regularly attending Writing Center sessions. Students meet for an hour each week with the same consultant over the course of the term to receive help on University Studies assignments. In these sessions, students gain experience in understanding assignments, formulating a thesis, meeting the needs of a reader, revising content, and proofreading/editing techniques. Through the ongoing relationship with the consultant, these students learn about the myriad ways that writers develop an effective, individualized writing process.

Another way in which Portland State promotes the use of learning communities occurs when Freshman Inquiry faculty from various disciplines become involved in collaborate learning and problem-solving strategies in the context of portfolio design and assessment. In the 1998-99 academic year, faculty decided together what elements should be included in the third-term student portfolio to reflect the learning goals of Freshman Inquiry. Finding agreement and common ground is never easy in a large, heterogeneous group, but through faculty team meetings and committee work, faculty agreed on a table of contents, a reflective essay summing up the student's accomplishments in the course, and individual selections that specifically address the program's four major goals. Individual teams may also specify what kinds of writing assignments must be included to meet the requirements of the course theme.

An even greater challenge for collaboration lay in creating scoring rubrics for each major goal, and in creating a community of readers who, through holistic scoring, could give validity and reliability to the portfolio scores. By working together to share assumptions about what constitutes good writing, faculty created a four-point scoring rubric for the writing goal. Following creation of the rubric, faculty volunteered during the summer to read and score a random collection of Freshman Inquiry portfolios. Through a calibration process of reading, scoring, and discussing anchor portfolios (one portfolio that exemplifies each score: superior, satisfactory, mediocre, weak), faculty became a community of readers who together applied agreed-upon standards of assessment. This venture demanded room for discussion and differences of opinion, and eventually anchored the readers to reliable assessment outcomes.

It is important to note that Portland State's writing program, in complement to the University Studies program, continues to offer writing courses. To meet the needs of our students who are under prepared, who are non-native English speakers, or who want advanced writing coursework, the writing program offers courses ranging from an introduction to college writing to advanced composition. This layered approach to writing--integrated general education courses in University Studies, writing intensive courses in the disciplines, stand-alone writing courses, and Writing Center support--gives PSU more opportunities to ensure the quality and quantity of writing instruction for our students. The learning communities we have established among faculty and that we are continually developing in our courses support and enhance our students' ability to think, read, and write critically. The challenges that we now face are in providing better assessment and placement for writing, in expanding our resources for our under prepared students to better help them succeed in academia, and in furthering the collaboration among faculty that is productive both for our own teaching and for providing a learning community model for our students.

Capstones and Academic Integrity

Susan Agre-Kippenhan[11]

Abstract

The award winning revised general education program at Portland State University's, University Studies, culminates with a required 6 credit senior Capstone Course. This article addresses the development of the processes needed to create and support these interdisciplinary community based courses

Portland State University's comprehensive general education reform, University Studies, culminates with a senior Capstone Course. These courses are intensive six credit commitments that bring together interdisciplinary teams of students under the leadership of faculty to address community issues and create summation products. Teaching a Capstone Course requires flexibility and structure, a multi-perspectives approach, clear communication of complex issues and above all the love of the process of learning as well as the outcomes. This article will identify what it takes to facilitate a successful Capstone from the perspective of a faculty member who teaches in the program as well as chairs a committee responsible for the academic integrity of the courses. It covers the process from the written course proposals to successful student learning experiences, faculty development and lessons for the future.

In the academic year 1999-2000 Portland State offered over 130 Capstone Courses that engaged close to 2000 students in community work in the Portland area. These uniquely designed classes provide a culminating educational experience. In a collaborative setting they combine learning from University Studies and the expertise gained in each student participant's major. The courses conclude with the creation of a summative product appropriate to the project. The Capstone offerings range from neighborhood revitalization efforts, work with the sheriff's office, math workshop for parents, work with emigrant populations, numerous efforts with schools, interpretive signage, performance based work, small business initiatives, to analysis of book clubs. They represent input from every unit on campus including two graduate schools and all the professional areas. And they culminate in products as varied as web site, written and oral reports, musical performances, curriculum development and health fairs.

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Obviously the recruitment of faculty and community partners, scheduling and coordination of such a program is a mammoth undertaking and it consumes several peoples' entire focus. And while these are crucial components I will concentrate my writing here on the issues most closely related to the academic processes.

Academic considerations are first documented in the proposal form

Capstones, like all University courses, go through a review and approval process. But unlike traditional course that employ a standardized new course proposal form a unique structure has been developed for these courses that re-conceptualizes the purpose of the proposal. At the core of this structure is an entirely different premise, one that poises a fundamental question - What issues would faculty have to think through in order to offer this course successfully? In contrast to a series of traditional questions that primarily focus on resource allocation i.e., would you need new facilities to teach this course or does this course overlap with other departmental offerings, the Capstone proposal delineates questions at the core of teaching. What are the primarily learning objectives? What is the community issue or need? What academic literature will you employ? And since all Capstones are open to all students we ask the question - how will various majors contribute to your Capstone?

The proposal form itself is considered to be an educational document. It clearly states that student learning is the primary objectives of the Capstone Course. It delineates the three unique aspects of these courses: to allow students to apply their area of expertise to real issues and problems that will culminate in a summation product, to give students experience working in interdisciplinary teams, to encourage students to become actively engaged in addressing community issues. And it requests specific learning strategies and activities for assisting students in the four goal areas shared by all University Studies Classes; communication, critical thinking, appreciation of diversity and social responsibility. The document provides definitions of strategies and activities and includes examples from other Capstone Courses.

Proposals as indicators of course success

Five years of experience reviewing proposals has lead to the conclusion that proposals can function as indicators of course success and that writing a comprehensive proposal assists in course design. Successful proposals need to address all the questions in a comprehensive and thorough manner while finding a balance that indicates an understanding that the student participants and their skills will help set the agenda for the course, while providing enough structure to form a base to build the shared agenda. The proposal needs to reflect a level of readiness to begin the project and in fact requires the proposer to list the relevant steps that have been taken to form a partnership in the community.

Reviewing proposals requires the ability to ask direct questions and a willingness to examine embedded issue. Proposals that are written for a discipline specific audience might indicate a faculty member that has not considered the range of students that may take their course, it may indicate assumptions about a shared knowledge base. Proposals that are vague may indicate that a project's conceptualization is incomplete. Overly ambitious proposals may indicate that the proposer has set unrealistic goals for the project or requires expertise outside of their range. The review process is attendant to these issues, both direct and implied and is considered a developmental process. The goal of the review is to assist as many courses as possible to meet approval. A system that accepts, defers or rejects proposals is used and the criteria and processes are circulated to proposers. Rejection outright is reserved for courses that infringe on civil liberties or do not address in any fundamental way the core requirements. Deferred courses embrace the spirit of the Capstone experience but may have questions that are insufficiently addressed. Proposals are referred back with comments ranging from requests for complete reworking to suggestions about logistics. Even proposals that are accepted in the first review may elicit helpful input. Proposal revisions may require faculty support and provisions have been made to provide that assistance through a range of faculty development opportunities.

Operationalizing the proposal

In addition to assisting with proposal writing faculty development can play an important part in creating the link between proposal development and operationalization. It has played an evolving role in the Capstone program. An emphasis on connecting issues has proven successful, by helping faculty to view programmatic goals and objectives as guides for their specific course goals and objectives. Faculty development has focused on an approach that integrates the various components of capstones courses into one integrated package. The course goals and objectives are viewed as a specific way to reach the shared programmatic goals and faculty are encouraged to present their courses to students in such a manner. Tested strategies and methods that emphasize the interconnectivity are tools for meeting shared objectives. Time is spent on reflection and logistics. All faculty development is created with an awareness of the unfolding role of the faculty member over time and takes care to capitalize on examples of faculty work. Seasoned Capstone faculty are encourages to assist and mentor new faculty and syllabi and course outlines are collected to serve as models.

Outcomes based in student learning

The measure of Capstone success is in student learning outcomes and should follow naturally from the operationalization of sound planning and course development. We have mounted ongoing assessment efforts to date and have expanded plans in place for the future. Student surveys/evaluations are routinely used as a form of self-reporting at the end of each course to gather course specific input as well as programmatic input. Questions on these surveys reflect consideration of the unique position of the Capstone Courses as community or service based learning courses and as the final piece in an integrated four-year general education program. Another method of assessment, focus groups, follows a standardized protocol and is administered to a sample of courses to get further input from students. Plans are in place to expand focus group discussions to community partner as well. The near future will see the implementation of final product review. Although the products take multiple forms they provide a distinctive record and as such should reveal important information around student learning issues.

Lessons Learned

As the Capstone Program at Portland State reaches capacity there are emerging lessons, while specific they may have implications for other similar programs. These lessons have been gathered starting with the first pilot course offerings in 1995 through the first year students enrolled in the courses as a requirement for graduation in 1997, when 35 course were offered, to the program to today with over 130 course offerings. The lessons garnered are based on a constant reflective process. Weekly administrative meetings address important considerations and review processes and structures.

One example of this reflective review is the development of the proposal structure over time. The initial proposal contained many of the key issues that are still in use today, however there has been a focusing to provide clarity, an expansion of questions to address reoccurring themes and to reflect what has been learned, and modifications based on articulation with other structures in the University. The proposal has also been modified to project important messages to faculty; a relatively recent addition is the question around academic literature. There is real value in compiling a literature search during course development and the request for this information serves to position these courses in an academic tradition that might have been lost as faculty concentrate on the community activities. In addition to the form the review processes has been regularized overtime, guiding documents and systems created, so that review can be timely and consistent even as personnel change.

Through reflection on faculty development, we have reached a conclusion that more successful efforts frame a specific issue of interest for faculty and offer development that provides real strategies and methods for immediate use, while raising questions for future consideration. Effective faculty development acknowledges the mix of faculty teaching these courses, a vital mix of tenured faculty, adjuncts and community partners, and works on assisting them to take their current expertise and fill in where they are less knowledgeable. Good development efforts also acknowledge that Capstones like other community or service based learning courses have a learning curve for faculty.

Our most pressing needs at present are in the area of assessment, particularly in a University setting where all units are increasing their efforts. Protocols and evaluation questions are revisited and revised for clarity based on emerging data. And while models have been invented for assessment particular to Portland State, say the review of final products, we have availed ourselves of existing work done at institutions mounting similar efforts. One important lesson that is crucial to the entire University Studies Program is the danger of over assessing, while multiple means are crucial for data collection over assessed groups of students and faculty do not respond favorably. Assessment tools have been crafted to serve multiple purposes and are delivered on a schedule that respects the time needed for administration as time away from other class concerns.

Conclusion

The Capstone Program at Portland State University has provided opportunities for students, faculty and administration to work together in ways that are very different than those provided by traditional course work. We note with excitement that we have ever increasing numbers of interested community organizations and strong projects that need addressing. The benefits for the University include increased contacts and visibility and a tremendous benefit in public relations. As the entire University Studies program assumes a more institutionalized role at Portland State we anticipate a constant cycle of review and revision in the structures and processes that support the endeavor. Clearly the systems needed to move a program towards capacity are different then those needed to maintain a program. At capacity we expect a large majority of the Capstone to continue from year to year. We anticipate the ability to move into an assessment-based model for course continuation while maintaining and improving the lessons we have learned for new course proposals.

Student Affairs in Helping Learning Communities Succeed:

Partnerships Beyond Functional Titles

Vasti Torres[12]

Abstract

Great emphasis is placed on partnerships between academic and student affairs divisions; yet few institutions have achieved a truly seamless integration of these two divisions. One way to explore the connections between student affairs and learning communities are to look at the values learning communities share with other academic disciplines and those shared with student affairs. This essay will highlight the factors that can promote a strong connection between student affairs and learning communities.

Partnerships between Academic and Student Affairs divisions have received a great deal of attention in the various higher education publications. Yet few institutions have achieved a truly seamless integration of these two divisions. With the emphasis on learning communities as an avenue to improve student learning, retention, and connection to institutions, the collaboration between academic and student affairs becomes even more critical. In order to explore this necessity and illustrate the potential benefits three areas will be discussed. First the commonalties and differences of historical philosophies between learning communities and student affairs; followed by a discussion of obstacles that institutions face in making a collaborative effort work. The final discussion point will focus on the things each area needs from the other.

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Philosophical and Cultural Histories

The literature on learning communities provides a variety of definitions and philosophical postures. In the recent literature three models have stood out: paired or clustered courses, cohorts, and team teaching. Each of these models has a different approach and operational definition of the term "community" (Levine, 1998). One of the common elements among all models is the focus on student-centered learning (White, 1998). This central philosophical tenet of student learning is one of the factors that unite institutions involved with learning communities, regardless of the approach they have chosen. The second factor is the involvement of "a community" in the learning process. With this involvement, learning communities are acknowledging that students can learn from each other and faculty serve "as partners in the learning process" (Levine, 1998, p. 13). By using a community approach to learning students can overcome feelings of isolation and lessen competition; both of these issues are associated with students' withdrawal from education (Astin, 1993). To some degree it should be acknowledged that community learning is contrary to the traditional academic culture. Many of the traditional models in academic disciplines favor individual work over group endeavors. The present tenure system encourages individual work in order to receive personal recognition for publications, teaching evaluations, and personal service to the institution. Parker Palmer (1998) referred to this as a separation of personal worth through rankings and competition for publications or resources. Though collaboration is encouraged, the competition for individual recognition often over shadows community-building efforts. The culture of community learning used by learning communities is at times radically different than the culture of empirical knowledge found in many traditional disciplines.

The community approach encourages what has traditionally been called a liberal education approach. While many academic disciplines base knowledge only empirical findings, learning communities have emphasized the integration of knowledge into meaningful applications with the intention of having students make meaning of the knowledge within the context of their lives. Knowledge based on empirical data should be value free, but knowledge based on the concept of liberal education should influence the intellectual maturity of students, thus not being value free (Kuh, Shedd, & Whitt, 1987). The 1828 Yale Report typified liberal education as advocating a humanist approach to education (Rudolph, 1962). This integration of both the intellectual and social aspects of students' lives has not been the norm in traditional classrooms, yet it is a desired outcome in many learning communities. By viewing the faculty member as a partner in the learning enterprise, faculty will be exposed to students' lives, rather than just their final product. These philosophical tenets may separate learning communities from some traditional disciplines, but they promote commonalties with student affairs.

The objects of a liberal education and the work of student affairs share a commitment to the whole student (Kuh, Shedd, & Whitt, 1987). The thread that can be clearly seen through the evolution of student affairs is the consistent commitment to developing the whole student (Student Personnel Point of View, 1937; Student Personnel Point of View -- Revised, 1949; A Perspective on Student Affairs, 1987; Student Learning Imperative, 1997). The historical beginnings of student affairs come from the delegation and performance of "tasks that faculty members no longer considered integral to the academic enterprise" (Kuh, Shedd, & Whitt 253). Thus faculty may have come to consider student affairs functions as separate from the academic experience. As a result models have been created that separate academic and student affairs divisions. The differences between the purpose of the work and desired outcomes create a significant gap between academic and student affairs (Fried, 1999). These differences are often re-emphasized in the organizational models adopted by each division. Student affairs divisions tend to be hierarchical with clear procedures for communicating information and decision-making. Academic departments tend to have flat organizations with emphasis on shared governance. Yet the distance between the interpretation of student affairs' and learning communities' purpose and outcomes are not as significant. While the two areas may have different organizational cultures, they share a strong philosophical connection -- student learning and the student as a whole are at the core of our work and desired outcomes.

Several writers within student affairs have advocated that faculty and student affairs staff use a common language that is centered around student learning (Fried, 1999; Student Learning Imperative, 1997). By focusing on a common language both divisions can begin to define how their practices contribute to academic enterprise. This idea of defining how learning takes place is at times more difficult for the student affairs practitioner. Assessing the out-of-class learning is difficult, which results in many practitioners inability to articulate how their tasks influence student learning. As a result these tasks can be seen as the reason student affairs is not a part of the learning enterprise. Yet, several studies have found that the "cognitive and affective development are inextricably intertwined and that the curricular and out-of-class activities are not discrete, independent events; they affect one another (sometimes profoundly)" (Banta & Kuh, 1998, p.42). Student affairs should acknowledge that one of the factors that contribute to a lack of assessment could be attributed to the entry point into student affairs work. Many institutions feel that anyone can do student affairs work, regardless of professional training. The untrained professional is not able to articulate the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of their work, which in turn prevent them from conceptualizing how they could assess their effort.

In the academic arena, an academic department would not hire someone without the appropriate training in that field, yet this is common practice in student affairs. Though no one wants to prevent talented professionals from working in student affairs positions, but there should be some agreement on what common knowledge all student affairs practitioners should have. By student affairs creating a common knowledge base among its own practitioners, we can better communicate and validate what learning takes place outside of the classroom. The notion of common language can unite academic faculty and student affairs, but it can also help in uniting student affairs practitioners towards a better integration of practices centered on student learning.

Shared Values

Throughout this essay historical and philosophical tenets have been used to explain the academic, learning communities, and student affairs cultures. Though it is important to know, understand and accept the difference, it is obvious that learning communities and student affairs share much more than is acknowledged. Both share the notion that the development of the whole student takes multiple methods of instruction. Both share the belief that student learning is more likely to occur in a community environment that allows students to learn from each other and make sense of the knowledge in their own way. Both share a commitment to student-centered approaches; though each may promote these approaches differently, the desired outcome tends to be similar. And finally both shares a group approach to problem solving that is not always typical of all academic endeavors. Learning communities have existed in student affairs for decades; they can be found in theme residence halls or in programming boards, yet they were never defined by the learning taking place, rather they were only expressed as extra-curricular activities. When one recognizes these shared beliefs, it should make collaboration a more natural process.

At urban universities this collaboration is critical for the student to feel a connection with the university. A unique aspect of urban universities is that the classroom often serves as "the home base" (Levine, 1998, p. 14) for students; therefore a sense of community in the classroom is most likely to influence students' development. Though out-of-class activities continue to be important for some students, many students only see the institution through their classroom experiences. The demographic profile of urban students makes the classroom an appropriate and necessary place to build community. The question that is not resolved is how student affairs can integrate its expertise into the context of the learning communities.

The literature on collaboration between academic and student affairs offers several suggestions for making the collaborative effort work. The first issue that is often mentioned is communication between the two divisions. This should include formal communication mechanisms as well as informal. The hierarchical nature of student affairs divisions can be an obstacle to establishing these communication efforts. Rather than looking up and down on an organizational chart, student affairs practitioners must be willing to look across organizational designations. The learning communities' approach to education should be integrated into the academic and student affairs collaboration model. If learning communities reduce competition and promote learning through group efforts, this approach should also work with academic and student affairs administrators. The competition for resources and expertise often lead administrators to compete with each other rather than collaborate. Perhaps we should look to the students as role models for collaborative learning. And finally, the artificial boundaries individuals draw within an institution serve only as obstacles and seldom promote a collaborative environment. These silos need to be broken down in order to create the desired seamless experience.

These suggestions are not easy tasks to accomplish, but they are necessary for the success of student learning. A seamless educational environment is critical for student learning and important for learning communities. Student growth often occurs as a result of crisis and challenges to one's previous beliefs causing an individual to rethink how he/she sees him/herself and promoting a new or different sense of being (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Both learning communities and student affairs encourage students to grow; now the professionals working in the two divisions will also need to grow.

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Using Undergraduate and Graduate Students To Build and Sustain Learning Communities

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Abstract

Portland State University general education program employs a unique model for creating learning communities. Undergraduate and graduate "mentors" work closely with faculty partners to develop and deliver the freshman and sophomore inquiry courses in the program. This paper describes the history of the program and the impact of it on students, faculty and the mentors themselves.

Portland State University's (PSU) general education program, University Studies employs a unique strategy for addressing student success. During the yearlong freshman level course (Freshman Inquiry) and term-long sophomore level courses (Sophomore Inquiry), undergraduate and graduate "mentors" are partnered with faculty to deliver these courses. In many other academic settings, a mentor is an experienced student who works with new students to aid in the adjustment to college. In our setting, the role of mentor is much broader. Mentors are role models, teachers, community builders, translators and more. The use of these mentors has contributed to the success of the Freshman and Sophomore Inquiry programs in ways that we had not anticipated at the inception of the program. This paper will explore the history of this program, the role of the mentor and explore insights on the impact of the learning community of students, faculty, and mentors.

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History

The Faculty Senate at PSU initiated a new General Education program, University Studies, in 1994. A Faculty Working Group developed the four-year general education based on Higher Education research on student success. Alexander Astin's work (1993) figured prominently in the development of the program as a whole and specifically in the development of a mentor program in support of the General Education Reform. Astin (1993) described several factors that were correlated with positive effects in General Education: student-student interaction, faculty-student interaction, discussing racial/ethnic issues with other students, hours devoted to studying, tutoring other students, and an institutional emphasis on diversity. University Studies was developed to address these issues within its curricular design.

The role of "Peer Mentor" was created to enhance student experiences in these areas also. Peer Mentors were assigned to individual faculty teaching Freshman Inquiry. Peer Mentors, who are upper-division undergraduates, attend the three-hour main section of the course and lead "mentor sessions" one hour twice a week with smaller groups of students. Originally, the primary role of mentor was to serve as a tutor of sorts for the main class. The mentor session would provide students opportunities to connect with each other in a smaller context and receive help from the mentors and fellow students on the coursework and in adjusting to college. As a student moved into Sophomore Inquiry, they would work with a Graduate Mentor in a similar fashion.

We have found that mentors have served these expected roles and beyond. In fact, we have found that mentors seem to be an integral part of our success in university studies in ways that we would never have imagined.

The Current Role of the Mentor

As mentioned earlier, the role of the Mentor in Freshman Inquiry and Sophomore Inquiry has evolved to include a multiplicity of tasks and functions. While being sensitive to the primacy of the faculty role in Freshman and Sophomore Inquiry, mentors now engage fully in a partnership with faculty to deliver the curriculum. Not only are they teachers, they are friends, facilitators of discussion and activities, technology trainers, role models and guidance counselors.

During the first years of University Studies, it became evident that mentors were more than just "tutors" and "guides." As with any institutional transformation process, the first years are a bit rocky. Faculty in Freshman Inquiry learned quickly that their mentors were valued colleagues in developing and delivering curriculum, managing classroom conduct, and providing collegial support as faculty endeavored to transform their own teaching strategies. Of significant importance in the first years, mentors served as a communication bridge between faculty and students aiding faculty and program administrators with valuable feedback on the impact of the program on students.

The mentor role today continues to be broad and multidimensional. As program administrators saw the role expanding, specific training and mentor support mechanisms were instituted.

Currently, the program employs 39 upper division undergraduate Peer Mentors and 32 Graduate Mentors. The positions are highly competitive and draw some of PSU's most talented and well-rounded students. Peer mentors are chosen for their academic skills (3.0 minimum GPA is required), interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, and commitment to program goals. At this point in the development of the University Studies program, the majority of the Peer

Mentors has been enrolled in the University Studies General Education classes and describes part of their motivation to be mentors as a way to give back to a program that was helpful in their own academic and personal development. Peer Mentors receive a Laurel's Scholarship (a state funded academic scholarship) that pays for their tuition and a small monthly stipend as compensation.

Graduate Mentors are chosen for the same qualities as Peer Mentors. In addition, we look for candidates' ability to approach learning from an interdisciplinary point of view. Graduate Mentors come from a variety of disciplines. A majority of them describe being attracted to the position because they want experience in interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning. Many describe being able to get more teaching experience than if they were Graduate Assistants in their home departments. Graduate Mentors are appointed as .30 FTE Graduate Assistants and receive tuition remission and a monthly stipend.

Writing an inclusive job description for mentors is difficult. All mentors are trained in collaborative/cooperative teaching methods, community building techniques, diversity education, teaching of writing, technology applications, and group/team development skills. Mentors are also trained in accessing campus and community resources. Minimally, mentors attend the main class sessions as an active participant in the course. Peer Mentors meet with small groups of students twice a week for one hour and Graduate Mentors meet once a week for one hour with small groups of students. Faculty and mentors ideally meet at least once a week to plan curriculum and discuss course and student progress. Graduate Mentors share the grading of assignments with faculty and Peer Mentors have input into the Mentor Session portion of student grades.

Because faculty and mentors enter into a partnership to work on a particular course, the role of the individual mentor is dependent on what each brings to the enterprise. In some ways, this is what makes the Mentor Program so unique and successful. There is not one "correct" way for a mentor to work. Faculty and mentors work together to create strategies that incorporate their personalities and strengths in order to contribute to their students' success. Mentors, in collaboration with their faculty often bring their unique talents and experiences into the classroom and the mentor sessions. For example, faculty can assign more complex technology assignments when they have a mentor who has extensive technology experience. A faculty with an English major mentor can confidently assign peer review during the mentor session. Mentors often influence the chose of texts and assignments. Mentors always provide valuable feedback to the faculty about how students perceive the course and how the course and assignments could be improved.

Impact of the Mentor Program on Learning Communities

We have observed that the Mentor Program has had an enormous impact on the students, the faculty and the mentors themselves. Again, it would have been hard to predict the breadth and extent of the impact of mentors at the inception of the program. The challenge for University Studies is to continue to investigate and document the impact of the Mentor Program.

Impact on Students

Students often speak during focus groups and in other settings about the role of their mentor in their success and comfort level at the university. As PSU is an urban institution that attracts first-generation college students or other non-traditional students, student retention and success is often dependent on how comfortable a student feels in this particular academic environment. Mentors, just by their presence, are strong role models of success in the university and a sign that students are valued at the university.

In addition, mentors role model and teach their students academic coping skills. There aren't many places today where students can get such pragmatic help as how to approach a complex text, how to read an assignment and how to see the broader and personal implications of any given topic. Time and stress management are often topics of discussion and mentors can speak from a uniquely current place about how to balance the multiple roles of a modern, urban student. Mentors share what works and doesn't work in academia. Coaching and "disciplining" of students happens once or twice a week and students seem to welcome rather than reject this encouragement from someone they consider a peer.

Perhaps anyone new to a challenging endeavor (as in being a Freshman or Sophomore university student) is likely to have difficulty interacting with those they perceive as having power over him or her. We have learned that mentors serve as a unique bridge between faculty and students. Mentors hear honest reflections from students about their experience at the university, in the class and in their personal lives. Faculty in the first years were shocked by the information that their students shared with mentors about their lives, things they did not often hear about in other types of general education courses. Domestic violence, homelessness, mental illness, lack of parental support and lack of academic preparation are all things that mentors tend to be more privy due to their "in-between" status. Knowing what a student is dealing with empowers both faculty and mentor to aid in helping the student, thus aiding in student academic progress.

Faculty also learned that students are much more likely to approach an "in-between" person about their concerns about the course, the assignments and their performance in the course. The "just in time" feedback that mentors have been able to provide faculty has greatly enhanced student success in a course. How often do faculty explain away the lack of class enthusiasm and success to lack of motivation on the students' part? Mentors' timely, but diplomatic feedback has enabled faculty to adjust their teaching to better meet students' needs.

Mentors also serve as a bridge to faculty by encouraging and modeling discussion with faculty. Students new to academia are often intimidated by faculty and have difficulty engaging the faculty-student interactions that are so important to student success. Mentors often walk that fine line between providing for the baby bird and nudging them out of the nest.

Students often describe finding a first friend at PSU in their mentor and making connections with fellow students in their Freshman Inquiry mentor sessions. In a large urban university that serves primary commuter students, Freshman Inquiry and especially the mentor sessions offer some sense of "home" on campus.

Impact on Faculty

While this area has not been studied systematically, there is evidence that mentors have had a significant impact on faculty development. Many faculty have talked about the unique opportunity to have a "colleague" to discuss their course with. Often for the first time, faculty have someone they can muse with about why a certain student seems to respond adversely to certain content and why that lecture didn't quite captivate their audience in the way they had planned.

Faculty report that their teaching and their own learning have improved due to their work with mentors. The continuous feedback loop allows them to continually fine-tune their curriculum. Often input from mentors allows faculty to see their topic of their course with a fresh eye. In addition, faculty report that they enjoy getting to know their students better through their input and the mentor's encouragement of students to use their office hours. Mentors help faculty reconnect with why they decided to teach in the first place.

Impact on Mentors

As with many peer helping programs, the greatest impact of the Mentor Program may be on the mentors themselves. While mentors, as a whole, are extremely successful students before they become mentors, they seem to become even better students. In spite of increased commitments and incredible challenges, mentors' GPAs, in general, improve. Mentors describe that mentoring forces them to organize themselves and their schoolwork. They have little free time and they also feel the pull to be an example for their students. Academics seem to improve, also, because not only are the students in the course learning to approach academic material in new ways, mentors are too. They often describe understanding material at a much greater depth than they had previously.

Because mentors are keenly aware of the goals of University Studies, they become keenly aware of the presence or lack of presence of these qualities in their own learning. If one could measure the extent of growth in the four goals of University Studies, mentors would clearly exceed their students' progress. Those who teach learn the most. For mentors this seems especially true. Mentors report significant improvement in the achievement in all four goals. Mentors describe being better writers, better critical thinkers, and better citizens as part of being a mentor.

Institutions of Higher Education have long ignored the rich resource we possess in our students. As one can see, the use of undergraduate and graduate "mentors" can have a far-reaching impact on students, faculty, and mentors, themselves. While the Portland State model may not be one that institutions can adopt completely, it seems important for institutions to seriously consider the use of students as "mentors" for building and sustaining learning communities.

Reference

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Senior Inquiry: A Portland State University/High School Collaboration

Barbara Traver[14] and Judy Patton with assistance by Jack Straton and Jan Whittlesey

Abstract

University Studies has been collaborating with two area high schools to deliver Senior Inquiry, a senior-year high school course based on the university's Freshman Inquiry course. The course is taught by teams of high school and university faculty partnered with peer or graduate mentors from the university. The article describes the impact of the program from the perspectives of the faculty team from Westview High School, the principal there and students taking the program currently and former graduates.

Program Description

University Studies, the general education program at Portland State University, is engaged in a collaborative project with and Westview High Schools that is an exploration of reform through shared curriculum and faculty development. The project began in 1995 at Westview High School and in 1996 at Grant and consists of teaching the yearlong, Freshman Inquiry course, to high school seniors. The course, "Embracing Einstein's Universe: Language, Culture and Relativity," is interdisciplinary and team-taught with the curriculum based on University Studies goals: communication; critical thinking and inquiry; an appreciation of human experience; and ethical issues and social responsibility. The curriculum integrates content with learning strategies to produce a rigorous and academically demanding program that supports student success. The high school courses meet for 95 minutes, five days a week. Teaching teams at the university include faculty from different disciplines paired with undergraduate peer mentors. At the high schools teams also combine high school and university faculty who teach with university peer mentors. Students who complete the program successfully and attend PSU earn 15 credits and move into required sophomore level course work in general education. Any motivated student who wishes to work at a college level may take the high school course. The opportunity offers support and experience to students who are interested in the challenge of interdisciplinary study and who may be unsure of their ability to achieve college level standards. The high school program is designed to:

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- Increase access to higher education for all students.
- Raise academic standards through curricular design.
- Demonstrable student performance in the four program goals.
- Connect education to community needs and potential career areas.
- Smooth transitions among educational institutions.
- Increase faculty interaction and share development throughout K-16 education.
- Integrate assessment in curricular design for improved teaching and learning and for program evaluation.

The recommended breakdown of quarter system credits for transfer is as follows:

- 3 credits -- First Year Writing Composition (WR 121 in Oregon)
- 4 credits -- Social Science
- 4 credits -- Science
- 4 credits -- Arts & Letters

PSU has formal transfer agreements with our sister institutions in Oregon. The University of Oregon accepts the credits into their general education requirements as listed above. At Oregon State University, they do the same but place the science credits in the elective category and require a laboratory course to satisfy their general education. Outside of Oregon the credits have been accepted as recommended at institutions such as the University of Washington, Bernard and the University of Puget Sound.

Senior Inquiry at Westview High School

What is distinctive about Senior Inquiry is that it is a learning community and the learning community is a powerful new tool both for secondary and higher education. The learning community created in Senior Inquiry at Westview High School is unique in our teaching experience. Powerful intellectual and personal bonds are forged. Students are more engaged in learning and more concerned with one another than in any other class. We have asked ourselves what is so singular about Senior Inquiry that it, alone, becomes a community. Obviously, this cannot be the result of only one factor. Rather, it arises from the combination of

- team-teaching
- an interdisciplinary theme
- emphasis on active learning
- valuing of emotional as well as intellectual response
- peer mentorship.

The team is at the very heart of Senior Inquiry. At the beginning of the course, we decided that we did not want the class to be merely a series of "experts", each teaching his/her own field. We pledged to both plan and teach together and to teach everything, not just own our subject. The result has been a class where the teachers set a tone of camaraderie and friendship. We kid one another in front of the students; we break down the walls of formality. Even more importantly, we constantly model the excitement of learning. The physicist discussing a work of literature for the first time; the English teacher sharing her interest in Bismarck and German unification; the historian teaching special relativity all bring enthusiasm and freshness to the class. Finally, since each of us must master material outside of our own discipline, the teachers model how to learn in different ways. The English teacher and the history teacher, for example, do not approach physics in the same way. Students see that learning is life-long and that even "experts" have different learning styles.

(*Note:* Material in italics comes from student work. These are reflections from their portfolios or from their first-semester final examinations.)

> *You teachers, just warp my mind when it comes to learning. You open up my eyes, and help me discover things that I would have never even thought of. It is the teachers of the Senior Inquiry class that help keep my attitude of learning in an always constant positive attitude. You make learning fun. Each day when I step into that classroom I am always eager to learn new things. Explore worlds that I never even knew existed... If learning wasn't fun, I would probably be with all the dropouts* (Ryan M.).

The interdisciplinary and thematic approach of Senior Inquiry is also a great strength. Simply put, students have never experienced a class like this one. For years, they have been asked to master subjects in isolation. Now a premium is placed on drawing connections, tying together diverse ideas and information. At first, they are reluctant, sometimes confused, and, on occasion, rebellious. By the end of the first semester, however, they have discovered the joy and exhilaration of creating their own meaning and constructing their own knowledge.

> *In the last two grades (sophomore/junior years), discussion groups were put together for just 15 minutes and then the teacher would tell you what they saw out of it . It left me with a feeling that I was wrong and when the other students had what the teacher had I thought that they were smarter. Now that it's been shown every idea is O.K. [it] makes me want to get into more discussion groups* (Richard R).

> *This Senior Inquiry class has really made the biggest shift. I used to try and close myself off from everyone, especially from school...No matter how hard I tried to keep myself unattached to this class, I couldn't. I've really learned a lot, not just from the teachers and books, but from the other students and discussions we've had. Now I find myself really getting involved and enjoying myself at school...I used to get an assignment and just hurry up to get it finished and try to get the best grade I [could]. Now I look at the assignment as something bigger. I ask myself "Why are we doing this? What are my thoughts about it? What does this assignment mean?"* (Shannon P.).

The emphasis on active learning in Senior Inquiry creates bonds among students. In a class where lectures are rare and group work and discussion paramount, passive listening is seldom possible. Students who work together for one and one-half hours a day cannot ignore one another. Even the challenging nature of the course helps these bonds. Students try study groups, some for the first time, to prepare for tests. They respond to one another's papers both inside and outside of class. In the toughest times, they feel the bonds of shared adversity.

> *[R]ight before the test, a group of us from both classes got together to study. I was leery of how successful it would be; however, I now realize the value of study groups. Each of us understood different parts and as we discussed the different concepts and formulas, things began to click in my head and I realized I understood more than I thought . When I was forced to be the teacher in some areas, I gained more confidence in my own knowledge that was validated by others. I went into the test with confidence, but I never anticipated that all my efforts to understand this mind-boggling concept would pay-off. When the tests*

> *were handed back, I was surprised and pleased to see a 70/70 on the top of the paper* (Beth T.).

Valuing emotional as well as intellectual response in class also results in more student engagement and in a stronger community. Students care more about what they are studying when they feel angry or sad or happy about it. Moreover, when they can go beyond seeing individuals as "right" or "wrong" and share personal stories of emotional experience, they are more engaged and the group is drawn closer together. The emotional bonds increase understanding in ways that intellectual discussion does not; this experience also motivates further learning. Many teachers fear allowing emotions into a course, but in fact, it's often the best thing that can happen to a class. This year, during a simulation, emotions of anger and frustration erupted; emails flew around the group every evening. We took the time to deal with these feelings and to come to resolution about them. The result has been a powerful feeling of community; students have learned that friendship can survive strong disagreement. Several students said that it was the best week of their entire school career.

> *This was English class, what did feelings have to do with anything? I felt nothing. That is until the day that we were assigned to read about Eugenics in America. I was so enraged *How could anyone think this way? I took up my pen and began to write like a mad man. I couldn't stop. With every line I found myself growing more and more anxious and I began to dive deeper into the meaning of the words written on this white piece of paper...My hand could barely keep up with my ideas and flashes, but I felt a feeling of relief when I had finished scribbling my thoughts out on the piece of paper. It was almost as though I was face to face with the author and I could tell [him] my side of the story. Instead of keeping my*

> *anger inside I was able to let it out in a productive manner. I sat back and realized that reading articles, poems, and short stories had never been interesting to me because I agreed with them, or because there was no point to argue* (Rea S.).

> *One day during a heated discussion about racism [MS] said something that struck me. She was going to say something that she knew many people would not agree with or even view as racist, but she said it anyway. I felt bad for her at first, people would ridicule her or make assumptions, I was suddenly thankful for my enraged silence. The class did not react how I had anticipated, [She] had verbalized what a lot of people feel but are too scared to say and there was a sense of relief. I do not remember exactly what the comment was, but the fact that she said it made me realize what a discussion can be. It does not have to be a battle between right and wrong, but a rational discussion to work out how and why we feel the way we do* (Rea S.).

> *Having an emotional response gives a base for an argument, since you build all of your opinions on your gut reaction to information. It also gives you a way to back up your opinions when asked about them. Telling others how you feel about something will often help them to understand where you are coming from in your argument* (Mike K.).

Finally, the PSU peer mentors are crucial actors in creating community. Peer mentor sections have fewer than fifteen students and provide an ideal forum for the exchange of ideas.

PSU provides excellent training for peer mentors. Over the years, we have worked with a dozen peer mentors and they have all been gifted in communication, teaching, facilitation and support. Their role is varied and crucial, ranging from helping students with writing, to teaching some of the content, to simply providing a place where students can express their frustrations and complaints. Their primary job, however, is to create community and foster discussion. They do many group-building activities and provide students invaluable support. Students who might be uncomfortable approaching a teacher always have someone to turn to, someone who is not so much an authority figure and who is closer to them in age. Senior Inquiry not only creates a community but it changes student attitudes toward learning. For many students, "learning" consists of memorizing information and repeating it back or finding out what the teacher "wants" and doing just that. If their grades are high, they feel they have "learned". In Senior Inquiry, students move to a different level of understanding. During the year, students come to see the power of their own ideas, the joy in reaching their own interpretation, the exhilaration of seeing a new connection. They realize that learning is internal, not external, and that it is different from grades. (Not that there isn't still concern about grades!) This excitement can spill over into other classes. Just yesterday, a student came in, bubbling with excitement because part of a lecture on eighteenth-century France in her Western Civilization class had given her new insight into her Senior Inquiry research paper on Soviet music under Stalin.

> *As I became a part of the class I realized that I was in charge of my own education. I was responsible for doing my homework in order to be prepared for the next day. If I didn't do my homework I wouldn't know what was happening in class discussion. Because of that change I realized that it wasn't about the grades. If I was putting my best into each assignment my grade would reflect*

> *it*Now I am doing school work because I am in charge of my education and I enjoy what I am doing* (Bret D.).
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> *I knew that the best way to prepare for the final would be to get together with other people in the class to discuss the different articles and how they related to one another. Although we never specifically dealt with the Nietzsche article, we discussed his influence on society. All of a sudden, everything clicked and I was able to connect Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud...The information that was once only words and facts in my head now has meaning because they intertwine, oppose or complement each other...Facts are useless until I make the information my own through the process of reading, organizing, and discussions. With this connection made, the number or letter at the top of the page has little meaning. I know what I know and a grade does not change that nor does it reflect what I take with me. I believe I have grown as a learner, acknowledging that I have the choice to make what I learn count for more than just the next test* (Paige F.).

The course's emphasis on inquiry and interpretation and its theme of paradigm shifts encourage students to question their assumptions about reality. For them, scientific knowledge is no longer "fixed". They know that new models will supercede what we use now. In particular, our study of issues relating to diversity has changed students' views of themselves and their place in society. One student described the shift she had experienced this way. "I am more aware of what I do not know and my obligation to society to know more. My perception of my world and the society I live in has been made bigger." Our goal has never been to make students share our views. It is, rather, to encourage inquiry and critical thought, to help students understand why they hold their ideas and beliefs. Surely, one of the highest aspirations for education is that it encourage the critical examination of received ideas and promote broader toleration of the beliefs of others.

> *Throughout the last two years of learning I have slowly begun a personal paradigm shift in my attitude towards many more personal issues. I have found that many other people within Sr. Inquiry have also started to question what they believe to be true and why. The hardest thing for me is to look at something I have always believed and ask 18 years later "why?" This class has helped to force me to examine many accepted issues and look differently at others.*
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> *The beginning was during evolution lectures in AP Biology when for the first time I listened to such a lecture without scoffing, and began to wonder "why not?" I still maintain to this day...belief in God, but I have found I care less about what happened [than] about what could have happened. Sr. Inquiry has shown me the evolution of thought through the ages, and how today's known ideas are mocked tomorrow. For this reason I see it as necessary to remain open to all possibilities. I admit that I doubt I will ever consider the possibility of a Godless World, but at least I now can sit without judgment on someone who does* (Jackie J.).

How has the course changed our teaching and us?

Senior Inquiry has been the most exciting and exhilarating course we have ever taught. All of the benefits experienced by the students have been experienced by us as well. We are constantly exposed to new ideas, new ways of seeing reality. We have the scary, but satisfying, task of mastering material outside of our own areas of expertise. We are constantly learning.

We, too, are part of a "learning community" and that is far more rewarding than filling the role of "expert". Our other classes also benefit because we can apply some of what we do in Senior Inquiry in those courses. We are much more likely to emphasize active learning and inquiry methods, to recognize different ways of learning, to encourage cooperation among students. (However, lacking a team, lacking an interdisciplinary focus, these "regular" courses never become the learning community that is Senior Inquiry.) The benefits to us of teaching Senior Inquiry must be great when you realize how much time and effort we must put into the course. Our planning meetings require at least two hours a week (on Friday afternoon, no less!) and we must prepare in several disciplines. In a given week, for example, we might need to read The Sound and the Fury, brush up on general relativity, and spend hours in writing conferences with students working on research papers. There are, of course, a great many papers to read. We are willing to go above and beyond because that is what is necessary to make the program work. The joy of teaching this class is well worth it!

Do we think there is a more effective way for PSU to work with high schools?

The answer in a word is no. Too often high school/university collaboration consists of "experts" swooping down from the university to tell high school teachers what to do. PSU, to its credit, has long had another model of collaboration: the Challenge program. This program allows students to earn college credit while taking a course at their high school. The high school teacher works with a PSU professor in setting up the course and the PSU professor comes out twice a year to deliver a lecture, examines some of the students' papers, etc. Challenge allows fruitful communication between the high school and university levels. However, the communication is still usually one-way.

Senior Inquiry is far more effective because it is a collaboration of teams and because a PSU professor teaches at the high school, not on an occasional basis, but as part of his/her assignment. The team approach is powerful at both the high school and the university and the cross-fertilization that occurs because of Senior Inquiry strengthens both. The PSU team member brings ideas used by a Freshman Inquiry team to the high school. Likewise, ideas used in the high school are brought back to the Frinq team. Ideas are also exchanged in the annual retreats. The best activities are those, which originate at Westview and are refined at PSU, or vice versa. The collective collaboration of so many dedicated teachers produces outstanding ideas.

Senior Inquiry from a Principal's Perspective

Even in the planning stages of Westview High School, our school administration, and especially our principal, Len Case, has supported Senior Inquiry. From the beginning Len has been enthusiastic about the interdisciplinary nature of the course. "The collegiate level is sending a message to us. We need to prepare our students in a different way. Integrated, interdisciplinary programs enhance learning at all levels." Senior Inquiry is also important to Westview because it is so rigorous and challenging. "The course gives students a different opportunity to approach material and a different way of learning. We are always searching for ways to help kids challenge themselves and Senior Inquiry provides a wonderful chance for students to study at a higher level."

Of special value to our students here at Westview is the opportunity Senior Inquiry affords for earning college credit at the high school. We are, of course, happy that students can save money by earning college credit at the high school, but the real benefits are academic and intellectual. In his initial discussions with us, Michael Reardon, then provost at PSU, vividly conveyed the vision of a seamless transition between the high school and the university. Too often, high school seniors choose to take a minimum number of courses or take easy, non-academic classes during their last year. While they may have fun, they have squandered valuable opportunities. We have found that Senior Inquiry has created the transition Dr. Reardon dreamed of. Students who take Senior Inquiry feel that they are truly in a college course. They have a professor as one of their teachers; they know that what they study and write is the same as what PSU students are asked to study and write. As a result, they stay engaged their entire senior year. Instead of being their last year in high school, the year becomes their first year in college. Rarely do they suffer from "senioritis". Moreover, if they take PSU Challenge classes in addition to Senior Inquiry, they have the potential to enter PSU with 31 credit hours.

Finally, Len's own son took Senior Inquiry and, as a parent, Len is an ardent supporter of the program. During Tyler's freshman year, he reported to his father that he felt very well prepared for college (University of Puget Sound) by his Senior Inquiry experience. He knew what was expected on papers and what process to follow to write a good paper. He knew how to write an "analytical paper". In fact, in his first college English class, he earned an A.

Comments from Former Senior Inquiry Students

Former students yearly email to thank us for the college preparation Senior Inquiry gave them. Far from finding freshman courses a challenge, these students sometimes report that, after Senior Inquiry, their college classes are easy. Former students are especially grateful for the training in writing they received. Just today, we received a message via a former student's parent. The student wanted to thank us and to say that he felt "very well-prepared" for his college English class. In fact, he was disappointed in his college instructor because a paper that he (the student) thought was very poor received a B+. Often students will email during their first year in college to ask faculty to pass on messages to the current year's students. Two examples of those are:

> *Stick with it because by the end of the year you will see things differently and be the proud owners of oodles of semi-useful information. And by the end of the year, even the most UNgifted of you will be fabulous writers and you will look down upon all your fellow classmates in college who got in because they copied somebody's entrance essay off the internet or whatever. I've gotten reports from several other Sr. Inqers from last year and they all say they feel rather unchallenged in their English courses because it's so much easier than Sr. Inquiry!* (Brian W.).

> *My advice? Put into Senior Inq. everything you've got, and you will have a big head start for next year. The stuff you learn will go beyond just Einstein's universe* (Ariana L.).

Students will also write faculty directly and talk about their sense of preparation and report how they are doing in college.

> *You guys really did a great job in preparing us. My papers are so much better and they take so much less time. One thing that helped more than anything is the in-class essays. It saved me so much grief and stress to be able to express myself clearly in essay form in a given amount of time* (Jenny F.).

> *What I learned last year has helped me so much this year, to the extent that when it comes to writing papers my friends have to work twice as hard for the same*

> *product. I enjoyed Senior Inquiry so much and it was the only class in high school I was really interested in - although there were times that it frustrated the heck out of me. I wish everyone had the opportunity to go through this program because the academic world would be so much better for it and maybe future students wouldn't have to sit through freshman writing seminar and re-learn everything from last year. Thanks so much for everything* (Erika H.).

> *The skills [Senior Inquiry] taught us have helped us immensely in college. I was prepared for my first few research papers. I know exactly how to approach them; I knew what my professors were looking for* (Katy J.).

Conclusion

PSU's original impetus behind the collaboration came from a desire to see, if by working together, we could make the transition from high school to the university more seamless for students. The hope was that the course, by being open to any student who wished to attempt college level work and receiving support to succeed in that effort, would encourage a broader range of students to feel confident enough to attend an institution of higher education. The university faculty involved knew that we could learn a great deal about the students who were coming to us as entering students and about how to work more effectively with high schools.

We have gained for more from the project than anyone might have suspected. While we need to assess the work more systematically and are moving to do that, we do think the collaboration is achieving its goals from the anecdotal evidence. In the high schools where this course exists, the understanding of PSU as an institution of choice has increased appreciably. While the collaboration did not start out as a recruitment strategy, in the beginning a single student expressed interest in attending PSU, and we now enroll yearly approximately 20% of the students who take the Einstein course. Another 20-25% transfer the credits to other institutions of higher education. Overall, 90-95% of the students who finish the course do enroll in some post-secondary institution either directly out of high school or after a short period of time. Students from other high schools in the Portland district call each year to see if they can take the course at one of the high schools. The program demands resources from the university, which sends a faculty member and several mentors into the partner schools each year, but the expense has paid off in a greater understanding of relationship between high school and the university and in the growth and success of the students. Our hope is to be able to expand the program to more high schools in the near future.

Assessment: A Collaborative Learning Practice

[15]Roberta Jessen and Cheryl Ramette

Abstract

Assessment has often been viewed with fear and loathing by faculty and students. Many times it has been used as a forum for debate and confrontation rather than as an opportunity for inquiry, learning, and reflection through stimulating conversation. In this essay we will discuss a model of classroom and program assessment we have initiated at Portland State University which provides innovative and reflective discourse about student learning in the university classroom.

Introduction

Five years ago we stood before a group of University Studies faculty and asked, "Please jot down what comes to mind when you hear the word 'assessment'." 'Death', 'taxes', 'going to the dentist', 'being judged', 'evaluation of my teaching', 'something to avoid', they scribbled without a moment's hesitation. Faculty anxiety would clearly pose a challenge in designing a workable assessment model for University Studies, but it was not the only challenge we faced. The program was unique; no other school had a similar general education track. It was to be implemented one year at a time beginning with Freshman Inquiry during year one; Sophomore Inquiry during year two; Upper Division Clusters during year three; and a Senior Capstone during year four. The program was based on extensive research of student learning, articulated in terms of learning goals (communication, critical thinking, ethical and social responsibility, and appreciation of the diversity of the human experience) rather than content outcomes. Students were not used to the idea of a thematic four-year general education curriculum. And, to complicate matters further, PSU has a large transfer student population, which would be weaving in and out of this nice linear structure, causing difficulties not yet imagined.

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[15] Roberta Jessen and Cheryl Ramette work together as assessment specialists at Portland State University in the University Studies program. Both have worked directly with assessment of University Studies since its implementation in 1994. Jessen and Ramette provide leadership in the design, implementation and results dissemination of the University Studies assessment plan. Together they have developed a classroom observation and classroom assessment process, have published several articles on their findings and have presented their work at numerous local, national and international conferences.

We realized early on that we would not begin to really understand the program until all four years had been implemented; yet we had been asked to design a concrete, comprehensive assessment for a program which had not yet begun. Each year it became more apparent that we needed a flexible assessment model to incorporate each level of implementation and to allow us to work cooperatively with students and faculty to gather data. We intended our assessment design to be a continuous process of evaluation, reflection and feedback. We knew we would need to utilize multiple methods and we planned to introduce assessment slowly, moving forward gradually as we formalized the process. We are now convinced that the time taken to do this is proportional to the relevance and usefulness of the results that are produced.

After much research on assessment models, we knew our goal was to design assessment as a reflective practice, meaningful for student learning, faculty scholarship, and program improvement. We wanted an ongoing, adaptable assessment process based on cooperation and feedback. Honoring the integrity of the classroom while integrating what began as an ethnographic study of teaching and learning has evolved into formal University Studies assessment methodology. We took time to develop trusting relationships that would allow assessment to blend non-intrusively into these community style classrooms. This essay will address some of the ways in which we have been able to build bridges rather than barriers to the assessment process.

Designing Assessment as a Reflective Practice

We learned through our first pilot assessment during the summer of 1966 that the most rewarding aspects of observational assessment were the conversations that resulted among students, faculty and us as they reflected upon their learning. When we told students we were there to experience how learning was taking place within the classroom their reaction was, "Gee, nobody has ever asked me about my learning before." Faculty confided in us that at first they were hesitant and anxious about being observed. After a while most faculty became more aware and reflective in their own practice than they had ever been before. It seemed as if this type of reflective assessment practice opened up new doors to the concepts of what assessment could be-a positive, useful and meaningful process for students and faculty as well as the program. We were so inspired after that first summer that we began to design a plan for observational ethnographic assessment over the next five years. Our approach was, and remains, one that is inherently focused on learning, which implies critical thinking about what is happening over time within the context of building a collaborative community of faculty, students and administration.

As a theoretical framework we looked to William Perry's (1978) theory of intellectual and cognitive growth and development. We studied the work done by Allison King (1993), Marcia Baxter-Magolda (1997), Stephen Brookfield (1995) and others who have found the relationship among students and faculty to have a significant bearing on student learning. In our first piloted classroom observation we documented, on a grounded theory basis, what was taking place in the class throughout the term. In doing so we discovered themes that led us to our own theories about learning within a classroom community. In addition to what we were witnessing in the classroom, two educators who write about assessment especially inspired us. Grant Wiggins (1995) in Assessing Student Performance, describes the need to assess individual students as well as a program. He addresses the ethical obligation to use assessment measures, which are meaningful to students and faculty. Toward this end, says Wiggins, assessment must be useful to students, faculty, and administration in a variety of formats. Assessment serves to clarify educational goals and to measure, or create measures for those goals. Outcomes from assessment are used to effect change in education, teaching, learning, and institutional efficiency. He defines assessment as "sitting with", that is, being present to what is happening in the classroom.

Parker Palmer, author of The Courage to Teach, is another source of inspiration. During a recent visit to PSU (Spring, 1995) Palmer discussed student learning with a group of faculty. He was asked how to objectively measure learning when the subjective experience seems to influence interpretations. This caught our attention, as we had noticed repeatedly the connection between feeling and thinking, not only in the process of student learning in the classroom, but also in our own process of interpreting assessment results. We had been concerned with how our own subjectivity might influence our data analysis and had struggled to remain objective. Palmer responded that our "subjective indwelling of the world is not a liability but an asset, passion is part of knowing, and knowing is communal, requiring attentiveness to feeling and hospitality."

In "sitting with" students in University Studies classes, we have noticed and documented how relationships immediately and directly affect the learning process. Because of this, we have found that assessment must be implemented gradually and thoughtfully, remembering that our relationships with the students we assess are key elements in our success at being able to answer our assessment questions. The evolution of our assessment model over the past few years is testament to our learning this principle of assessment practice. The subjective aspect of our work has been instrumental in developing objective assessment measures, as we have based these measures on the discovery and exploration of themes emerging within the (subjective) learning process.

The Beginning

In the beginning, our assessment questions were: How are University Studies classes accomplishing the goals set forth for general education at PSU? How does the program work from the perspective of the students? Is learning attained through University Studies classes carried along throughout and beyond the students experience at PSU? What does it take from faculty to teach in this program, and what difference does it make? Ultimately, how does the vision of this program play out in "real time", with real people learning together in an actual classroom?

During year one we worked with faculty who were willing to experiment with integrated assessment as part of their courses. The summer session of Freshman Inquiry became our pilot project, and the following year we worked with the entire Einstein's Universe team, which consisted of five classes that met twice weekly. We introduced ourselves to the students at the beginning of the year and proceeded to develop participant observation practices within the classroom. We also developed wonderful relationships with many students and faculty that continue to guide our work, and their work, today.

Sitting with students in classes, doing much of the assigned reading, participating in class discussions and free writes, talking with students informally, and in interview sessions, discussing teaching and learning with faculty, led us all to many insights about how the program was working. Even though the four goals run throughout the program, the ways in which these goals and course content are addressed varies widely. Two students, each in a different section of Einstein's Universe will have a very different experience of the program - yet we were able to recognize several global themes in University Studies classes by the end of the first year.

Teaching and Learning Themes in University Studies

Learning in Public is central to the University Studies program. Faculty are required to work on interdisciplinary teams and students are required to collaborate with classmates. Faculty team meetings, visits to one another's classes, students group projects, presentations, peer review, class and mentor session discussions are the intellectual heart and soul of these courses.

Some students are ready, able and willing to speak up in the classroom. Other students, those who have not yet "found their voice", often do so after getting "permission" to enter the conversation. They may need to be called on, asked to share from their journal, or given the task of interpreting a portion of a text for the class. Learning in public is risky, requiring attention and structure on the part of faculty. Focused free writes, reading from journal entries, doing "pick a passage" exercises, acknowledging group process, and creating situations where those who do not speak up naturally are given an opportunity, have all been successful strategies.

The degree to which faculty are willing to engage in public learning is proportional to the degree to which students will do so. Students look toward their instructor to determine what is important and meaningful, and will follow their lead.

Community in the classroom is usually important to student's success at PSU. While it seems basic, listening to each other causes students to engage in understanding diversity in a real way. We have observed classes where students who did not participate at all during the first term of Freshman Inquiry blossomed by the third term, expressing leadership in directing group discussions and offering alternative viewpoints. In other Freshman Inquiry classes, students remain silent and unknown. Most often, there is a middle ground where students learn to appreciate each other during the year. One student said, "Reading our papers to each other changed my feelings about several of the people in this class." Another student commented, "I would never have imagined that {X} thought about the things in his paper because he had never spoken up. Now, I feel I know people in the class, and can really appreciate everyone."

Listening refers to both faculty/student and student/student relationships. During interviews and class discussions, students often said they knew their presence was important to the class. Sometimes this was surprising, as in the case of a very quiet class who spoke out only when the frustrated instructor said, "I will no longer require attendance." Students suddenly became vocal, "But the class doesn't matter if we aren't all here!" and, "This is an interactive class, we all have to be here to learn." Here was a class where having a discussion was like pulling teeth, proclaiming that the class discussion was fundamental to learning. This is amazing to anyone who worries about silence, yet is so important in understanding classroom dynamics.

Movement is important to student involvement in classes. Physical space, which is usually clearly defined in classroom settings, is fluid in University Studies classes. Rooms are composed of long tables and comfortable, adjustable chairs, which invite group specific arrangement.

Most of the time classes make use of the room as it exists when they enter the class. This can result in strange seating arrangements with one table isolated in the center of the room, tables arranged in a large horseshoe, students facing the back of the room, etc. We have often marveled at the way the class attempts to adjust to these odd seating arrangements, which actually require the students and instructor to exert extra energy to accommodate. It takes attention and focus on the part of the faculty to use the potential of physical space to encourage their intentions for the class. When the instructor takes time at the beginning of class to say, "Okay, please move the tables and chairs as follows..." it allows the students a chance to create their environment. It gives the class a chance to design its structure, in physical sense, which contributes greatly to discussions and work done in class.

The usual position for the instructor is in the front of the room. When instructors vary their position in the classroom, students tend to participate more authentically. That is, when an instructor sits in the middle of the class, students who sit here to avoid participation tend to become involved. Likewise with students, who sit in the back of the room, reading newspapers and talking with one another. Moving students around the room for assigned activities such as group work, peer review or just to mix things up is also effective. The physical act of standing up in class, and moving to other locations seems to awaken students and faculty. We are all used to sitting in a certain chair, in a certain spot in the room, with a certain group. Mixing up creates new perspectives that cannot be minimized. It also takes a willing attitude on the part of faculty, because the students will generally not do this on their own.

Group Interaction is fundamental to the success of University Studies classes. Groups can be informal, assigned by the instructor, or related to projects. The mentor sessions, which accompany freshmen and Sophomore Inquiry classes, are also sub-groups of the main class providing a more intimate setting. In Freshmen Inquiry, as the year progresses students tend to become more comfortable speaking up about their life experience and the readings at hand. Students, especially Freshmen, are very interested in each other. Even in quiet classes, most students tell us that getting to know each other is the most important feature of the program.

Group interaction can be in the form of partners sharing their journal entries, groups of three reading to one another from their essay drafts, mentor sessions practicing for presentations, class discussions based on reading and interpretation of texts, or spontaneous outbursts from students who are either frustrated or excited about something happening in class or in their lives.

Student Voice and Student Language has redefined the goals of the University Studies program. Students do not usually understand the program until they have been through several classes. Even then, many students are not sure what this program is about or why they are required to take prescribed courses. Their language does not match the language used to describe the goals of the program. PSU outcome language such as, "Students will understand the variety of the human experience", means nothing to students. In their words the goals may be interpreted as, "listening to other people in the class, some of them are not people I would ever have wanted to listen to", or "I never thought I could learn so much by working in a group." As far as diversity goes, rarely do freshman students see their differences limited to racial variety. In fact, they are focused more on their relationships with one another, and the differences in others' experiences in the classroom, since, as we said previously, students at this age are socially motivated.

Providing faculty with student responses from focus groups, class evaluations, and conversations in the hallway has helped us all to better understand how the students speak about the goals of the program, and how they find value in those goals. By and large, students do appreciate their learning in University Studies, although they do not articulate the program in the way it is defined in administrator language. One favorite student response was, "University Studies sucks. Except for the classes I have taken which have been some of the best classes I've had at PSU".

Busy work to students is not busy work to faculty. The importance of the assigned reading and class work is reflected in student's responses over our years of observation and interviews. Basically, what is attended to in class is what the students deem to be important for their education. When talking with students about what they describe as "busy work" we were curious to find that the term often referred to reading, use of technology, writing assignments and other work essential to college courses. Writing a paper can be just going through the motions, journal writing can seem like keeping a diary, learning Excel but not using it for an assignment can seem futile, reading a text that is never referred to in class discussions is frustrating and confusing. Students say, "We get these assignments but never follow up on them." Or, "I have a job, a family, a major...I shouldn't be asked to keep a journal every day if I don't want to." And, "I'm paying money for my education, I shouldn't have to take general education courses when they take away from my major."

We listened and heard the student experience in the words of the students. Many have families and/or jobs, and all have lives outside the classroom to which they are committed. Students are unwilling, or unable, to take their precious time to read something they will not understand, can not apply, do not know how to interpret, will not be discussed in class, and will not be tested. Perhaps faculty wish this was different, that students were all unencumbered, eager and thirsting to learn. But the fact is, most of them have competing obligations and are trying to juggle multiple priorities.

Students do want to be held accountable, but they need a structure for this to happen. We don't mean to say they need the traditional structure of tests and quizzes, but something that requires them to use and experience the information directly. Faculty are learning they must thoughtfully consider and carefully structure into class the reading, writing, and group work required of their students if the goals of University Studies are to be realized.

How did we get faculty to do this?

The question we are most often asked when talking about assessment in University Studies is, "Yeah, but, how do you get the faculty to let you come into their classes and listen to you? How do you get them to do assessment?" Rarely do we hear questions about how we are able to get students to open up to us. Students are quite open to relationship, so even though our role in the classroom is a curiosity, they are almost always intrigued and readily offer their views. Working with faculty has, on the other hand, required a certain amount of finesse. In the past five years we have worked closely with, and actively listened to students and faculty in our efforts to understand and resolve challenges to assessment. Each year, the program has undergone change, fluctuation and adjustment. Through this process we are learning to recognize assessment as a fluid process subject to alterations inherent in the evolutionary nature of the program. Attending to relationships is a catalyst for our work.

From the beginning, our approach has been to work with faculty who are open to doing assessment in their classes, or are at least willing to experiment with assessment as a tool for learning. We do not impose ourselves, or the University Studies assessment plan, although this is a fine balance because there is now a program wide assessment that is required of all faculty. This assessment is based on our previous work in classroom observation, student interviews, and faculty discussion, as well as qualitative and quantitative reporting of results. We ask regularly for feedback from faculty on the usefulness of the assessment they are doing, and for suggestions on how to further integrate assessment into their classes.

Through patience, listening, and willingness to rework our assessment strategies when needed we have been able to include faculty and students in our assessment design. Our conversations with students and faculty have provided us with a unique perspective of the dynamic that occurs in and outside the classroom, especially as it relates to the connection between teaching and learning in a collaborative community among faculty and students. As the process of sharing our observations evolved, we noticed the importance of the resulting communal group learning process. At the end of each term we write up summaries of our observations to share with faculty mentors and with faculty teams. When meeting with individual faculty, we talk about what is happening in their classes. They often remark it is helpful to have ‘another pair of eyes’ in the classroom. Many faculty have echoed what one instructor told us, “I have never before had anyone observe my teaching. It makes me aware of my teaching in a way I’ve never been.”

Ongoing Challenges with Assessment, and the Current University Studies Assessment Plan

Assessment is time intensive when done to capture feelings and thoughts about, as well as content learned, through general education. Higher education is fast paced and not always conducive to authentic assessment practices, however well intentioned. Assessment, as we practice it, shifts and bends each year along with the changes taking place in the University Studies program. When faculty are uncomfortable with a class interview process, do not understand how to use assessment feedback, or feel the integrity of the class is violated by too much evaluation, we have learned to pause, take stock of what we are doing and rework our methods. In this way, faculty are able to have a central role in carrying out the assessment plan.

Communication with faculty is paramount to successful assessment. One of our greatest challenges is getting information back to faculty, in a useful format, in a timely fashion. It takes dozens of hours to transcribe, code and interpret data gathered through student free writes. However, the time spent is well worth the effort, as it allows us to hear the goals of the program spoken in the student voice, and shows us clearly where the strengths and weaknesses of the program exist. Even so, it is difficult to pull it all together term by term, and year after year. We have learned what works well and what doesn’t seem to work. Knowing when to abandon a particular strategy that doesn’t work well is probably the most difficult part of our assessment planning. Being aware of the changing nature of the program has made it easier for us to accept alterations that we need to continuously make in our own process.

This year, assessment of University Studies courses includes some classroom observation as requested by faculty who have found it to be useful and are having difficulty understanding the dynamics of their class or are feeling unable to connect with the students. We did a focused free write and group discussion in all Freshman Inquiry courses during Fall term, summarized the responses and met individually with faculty and peer mentors to discuss the results. In the free write, students respond to the questions, *"Regarding this course, what has been most important to you for your learning?"* and *"Regarding this course, what have you found to be obstacles for your learning?"* All Freshman Inquiry classes took the College Environment Scales (Roger Winston, University of Georgia) during winter term, and will do a course evaluation at the end of the year. We will visit selected classes again during Spring term to do a follow-up free write and discussion, and are available to do this process if requested by faculty at other points in the year.

During the summer a group of faculty from the University Studies program and other departments will do a review of Freshman Inquiry portfolios, based on a pilot project last summer. We have developed rubrics which reflect the University Studies goals, and which were designed with the students' vocabulary in mind. This year we will be paying special attention to the level of development that can be expected by the end of the freshman year.

In Sophomore Inquiry, all classes complete a course evaluation at the end of each term along with an open-ended question, ***"What has been important to your learning in this course?"*** We analyze the data from these responses to compare students (self report) learning to University Studies goals and to faculty expectations. We also write individual summaries for faculty to give them another perspective to their class and to hopefully make connections between faculty development, assessment, and classroom dynamics.

The Capstone portion of University Studies is unique even within the program, as it involves community partnerships and is taught mostly by adjunct faculty, who are not often fully aware of their place in the scheme of general education at PSU. During the past two years we have held focus-group interviews with Capstone students, and have developed a course evaluation tool that serves the needs of the university, faculty, students, community partners, and various grantee's.

We have yet to develop workable assessment strategies within the Upper Division Cluster portion of the University Studies Program. This level presents enormous challenges, because these courses are offered through individual departments (most are previously existing courses) and fulfill a variety of needs (major requirements, University Studies requirements, elective options). In many cases, faculty teaching Cluster courses do not fully understand what a "Cluster" is, let alone understand what "Cluster" they are involved in teaching. The goals of the majors interconnect with (and sometimes are seen by students to be at odds with) the University Studies program.

Conclusion

We continue to learn as we reflect with students and faculty through assessment of teaching and learning, and assessment of the program. We have many insights about what is happening the classroom, and why, and often speculate on ideas for formal research projects. One area of interest is connecting community in the classroom with critical thinking. We have learned through qualitative assessment that many student feel the community in the classroom has a direct effect on critical thinking. They repeatedly tell us that class discussions are a rich and valuable part of learning. Again, students' remarks show clearly how relationships are essential to the learning process.

We continue to be delighted, and sometimes distressed, by what we learn from students about their educational values and thoughts for the future. Many freshmen students are hesitant about their preparedness for university work, which is to say intellectual work - work that implies the goals of University Studies to be enacted. Watching the students learn and grow, witnessing their struggles and breakthroughs, has convinced us that real time, authentic, assessment is crucial to understanding the process of education. We are delighted when students who were in previous classes where we observed, or who participated in focus groups, stop us in the hallways to share graduation plans, talk about job opportunities, and give us a bit of insight into how their classes are going. They know we will listen, and they know we will use their experiences to improve the program.

We have also developed very rich relationships with faculty in this process. Four years ago, we faced a tremendous amount of resistance to assessment of any kind. As we worked closely with faculty and students, they began to trust our motives. It is deeply rewarding to see how open faculty are to the process of assessment when relationship, trust, learning, and the community of scholarship that results. The relationships we have developed with faculty and students are the foundation for our assessment practice. We have gone through the fire in finding our relationship with University Studies faculty. It is truly our greatest, while still ongoing, accomplishment. It cannot be stressed enough how important these relationships are in allowing us to work together as a collaborative team in assessment of student learning and program quality.

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